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DISCOURSES

ON

THE MILLENNIUM,

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION,

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH,

AND ON THE

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE APOSTOLICAL
INSTITUTION OF EPISCOPACY:

TOGETHER WITH

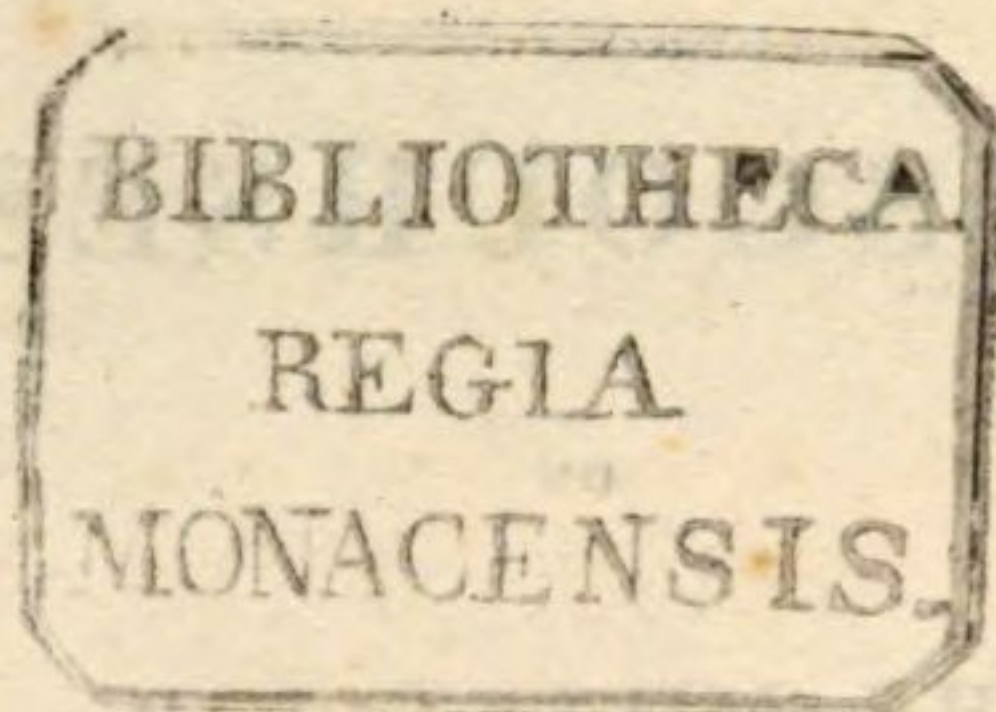
SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON THE PRINCIPLES
OF SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION.

BY THE REV. MICHAEL RUSSELL, LL. D.

Author of "A Connection of Sacred and Profane History," &c.

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THE DOCTRINE OF ALLEGATION

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

AND OF THE

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE APOSTOLICAL

INSTITUTION OF BISHOPRIC

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SOME THEOLOGICAL REMARKS ON THE PRINCIPLES

OF ECCLESIASTICAL INTERPRETATION

BY THE REV. MICHAEL KESSELL, M. D.

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Oliver & Boyd, Printers.

TO
THE MANAGERS AND MEMBERS
OF
THE EPISCOPAL CONGREGATION AT LEITH,
THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSES,
OF WHICH THE SUBSTANCE WAS PREACHED IN
THEIR HEARING,
ARE DEDICATED
WITH MUCH AFFECTION AND ESTEEM
BY THEIR FAITHFUL FRIEND AND SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.

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TO

THE MANAGER AND MEMBERS

OF

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION AT BOSTON

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE

OF WHICH THE SUBJECT WAS TREATED BY
THE AUTHOR, AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
ASSOCIATION, HELD AT BOSTON, SEPTEMBER 1ST, 1840.

AND DEDICATED

TO THE ASSOCIATION, WITH MUCH ATTENTION AND INTEREST.

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

ABOUT eighteen months ago, in the course of my professional duties, I delivered a series of Sermons on the Millennium, the Doctrine of Election, Justification by Faith, the Assurance of Faith, and the Freeness of the Gospel. The importance of these subjects gave to the Discourses a degree of interest, which they could not have derived from the abstruse and rather scholastic manner in which they were handled ; and hence arose a request for their publication, communicated to me through a channel to which I have always felt inclined to pay the utmost respect.

The reader will perceive that the form in which the Discourses now appear is not precisely that

in which they must have been delivered from the pulpit; and, I may add, that some authorities and even arguments have been inserted which would not have suited the time and place of religious instruction, and more especially in the hearing of a mixed audience. In other respects there has been no material alteration.

In treating of the Millennium I have not concealed my opinion that, in its primitive and proper acceptation, it is a subject with which we Christians have no concern. It originated with the Jews in times long prior to the era of Redemption; was ingrafted by the converts of that nation upon the religion of our Saviour; and has been perpetuated in the church ever since by the operation of causes which have no connexion with the grounds or purity of our faith. With the view now stated I have endeavoured to prove, that the period originally fixed for the Millennium—the seventh chiliad or thousand-years from the

creation—has long ago expired, and that we are now in the eighth millennial age, reckoning from the date of the Mosaical cosmogony.

On the Doctrine of Election, as well as on that of Justification by Faith, I have not presumed to do more than to abridge the arguments of certain divines, whose opinions are familiar to every theological reader, and whose learning has been ever held in high esteem. On the latter subject, I take leave to recommend the works of Bishop Bull, Dr Waterland, and of Bishop Gleig; the last of whom, in his “Directions for the Study of Theology,” has succeeded in placing the Doctrine of Justification in a clear and most convincing light, and has thereby opened up an easy path for all future inquirers into that most important article of the Christian faith.

As to the Discourse on the Historical Evidence for the Apostolical Institution of Episcopacy, I may be permitted to observe, that a small impres-

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sion of it being already sold, the bookseller has suggested the expediency of reprinting it in the present form. The occasion on which it was preached will account for the choice of its subject, without the necessity of supposing that the Author has any desire to excite opposition or to provoke controversy. The views contained in it are necessarily those which are held by every Episcopal church, while the facts and reasonings upon which they are founded have long been familiar to the student of ecclesiastical history in all parts of Europe. In such circumstances, this Discourse could have no other object than to bring within a narrow compass the arguments which have been employed by more diffuse and systematic writers; and it may not be improper to add, that it owes its appearance in print to the success which was imagined to have attended the exertions of the Author, in that one respect, by those who were entitled to order its publication.

The sermons on the Assurance of Faith and the Freeness of the Gospel have been withheld, solely because the volume has already exceeded the limits to which it was originally meant to be confined. This omission, however, is of less importance, as several treatises on these subjects have been recently published by able writers in different parts of the kingdom. As to the former, it may be observed, even in this place, that the difficulty most likely to be felt by an unlearned reader arises from the loose translation of the original expression, which certainly does not convey the meaning usually associated with the words of our English version. In regard, again, to the latter, the Gospel is free or gratuitous in the same sense as are all the other benefactions of Divine Providence ; life, health, talents, a fertile soil, the heat of the sun, and the drops of rain. But to all these gifts certain conditions are attached, without a sedulous and persevering compliance

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with which, health, talents, a prolific soil, and a favouring climate, will not avail either to our happiness or our improvement. So is it with that greater gift of God, the eternal life which is promised in the Gospel. Conditions are added in this case as well as in the other; and, in both, the object of our desires must be "worked out" with fear, humility, and obedience. The weightier errors, which from time to time spring up on such subjects, may be traced to a neglect of that instructive analogy which extends to every article of the Christian faith, and of those general principles which connect, in the most beautiful harmony, all the counsels of the Eternal. The same wise system embraces the heaven and the earth; operates according to the same laws in things spiritual and temporal; and to every intelligent eye makes manifest, by the small part which is disclosed, the gracious object of that which is concealed.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

ON THE

PRINCIPLES OF SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION.

THE main source of the difficulties which we have to encounter in expounding the Holy Scriptures may be traced to loose notions in regard to the precise object and limits of inspiration. It might be thought beforehand, that the mere circumstance of certain writings having been composed under the direction or superintendence of the Divine Spirit, would of itself remove all doubt as to their meaning, and encourage every reader to peruse them with the utmost confidence that he could not fall into any material error. But there is no one so little acquainted with the history of religious opinion as not to have perceived, that

most of the differences which divide the Christian commonwealth, and afford subjects of controversy to the theological schools in every section of the church, originate in mistaken views relative to the nature of that control which was exercised by the Spirit of Truth over the authors of our Sacred Books. For this reason, I take the liberty to submit a few observations, the result of some thought and inquiry, on the object and extent of inspiration; more especially as it bears a reference to the New Testament at large, and to the Epistles of St Paul in particular.

The first thing, then, which strikes even the least reflecting reader, is the obvious fact, that the supernatural assistance vouchsafed to the inspired writers did not suspend or supersede their natural talents and previous acquirements. There are, for example, in the compositions of St John, St Luke, and St Paul, the same characteristic varieties of style and manner of thinking that we should expect to find in the works of any three men, whose education and professional pursuits had been directed to different objects. Inspira-

tion, therefore, did not affect the literary qualities of their writings ; the choice of words or of illustrations ; the structure of their sentences ; or the selection of rhetorical ornament. To imagine the contrary, indeed, would carry us to the conclusion that all the Gospels and Epistles ought not only to exhibit a complete uniformity in their style, but also, that they should be regarded as the most perfect specimens of composition, and the standard of excellence to every other author who uses the language in which they are expressed. As this is not the case, we are at perfect liberty to apply to the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles the same canons of criticism by which we guide our research, when endeavouring to ascertain the import of any other ancient volume.

We ought, in the next place, for the reasons just stated, to make a distinction, when interpreting a passage of Scripture, between the *doctrine* which it contains and the literary apparatus, so to call it, whether of metaphor or allegory, which has been employed by the author for illustrating his argument. This remark extends to the narrative

of the Gospels, as well as to the more recondite disquisition of St Paul's Epistles. As to the former, it is not necessary to believe that all the incidents mentioned in the parables had an actual existence, and were meant to constitute a portion of authentic history. For example, we must not imagine that it falls within the limits of our faith to receive as a literal fact, that a certain king made a great supper on the marriage of his son, and that, as none of the persons who were invited would accept the royal hospitality, it became necessary to call in the blind, the halt, and the maimed, from the highways and hedges. The same observation applies to the similitude of the man who went into a far country, leaving to his servants a portion of goods or a number of talents, to occupy their industry until he should return ;—to the barren tree, for which the husbandman interceded ;—to the lord who let out his vineyard, and at length sent his only son to receive the fruits ;—to the unjust steward ;—and even to the affecting parable of Lazarus and Abraham in Hades, or the place of departed souls. The doctrine

in all these cases is perfectly manifest and full of valuable instruction ; but as to the vehicle in which this divine knowledge is conveyed, it concerns us not to ascertain how far it was constructed of real facts, or whether it owed its existence to a pious imagination, or even to traditionary lore.

This principle of interpretation is applicable with still greater force to the writings of St Paul. His Rabbinical learning, which he brought from the feet of the Rabbi Gamaliel to the altar of the Redeemer, is frequently employed by him, especially in his arguments with the Jews, to explain the great purposes of the Christian revelation. For instance, when he illustrates the doctrine of Election, he refers to the case of Jacob, whose descendants were chosen to be the peculiar people of God, while those of Esau remained beyond the limits of the Divine covenant. But, instead of stating this fact on general grounds, and as affecting two considerable nations, he confines the attention of his readers to the personal qualities of the two brothers, as if they had been individually the object of love or of hatred in the eyes of Almighty

God. Here, too, we must be careful to distinguish the doctrine from the historical incidents which are brought forward by the inspired writer for the sake of illustration. His views as to the former are worthy of our utmost reverence ; but it does not follow that we must regard the elder son of Rebecca as labouring under the frown of Heaven, and far less as being exposed to any peculiar malediction in respect either to the things of this world or of the next.

In like manner we appreciate the truth of his observations and the value of his precepts, when, in his Epistle to the Galatians, he maintains the superior excellency of the Gospel compared to the Law, both as a system of belief and as a rule of life. But the faith of a Christian is not concerned in determining whether his allusion to Abraham's two wives possesses any higher authority than might be found in the schools of the Rabbis. The two females, the freewoman and the slave, were viewed by the Rabbinical doctors as representing—the one the favoured condition of the Jewish church in covenant with Jehovah, and

the other the debased estate of the wild Ishmaelites, whose hands were turned against every man, and who, of consequence, were held as enemies by all civilized nations. The application of the same allegory to the more reasonable service of the Gospel might perhaps arrest the attention of Jewish converts ; and, in the use of it, the Apostle affords an instance of that wise accommodation by which he became all things to all men that he might gain some.

These remarks have been suggested by the practice, pursued by some writers, of supporting particular tenets, not so much by adducing the actual doctrines of St Paul, as by drawing conclusions from his metaphorical language. In the references to Sarah and Hagar, to Jacob and Esau, they are pleased to see more than the Rabbinical method of handling an abstract subject transferred to Christian theology. They perceive in these domestic occurrences a positive example of election and reprobation ; thereby rendering the doctrine subordinate to the figurative illustration, and forming the basis of a creed out of the rheto-

rical elements of an ancient tongue. The practice now mentioned is one which cannot be too carefully avoided by the young divine.

A third rule, which may be of use in expounding the Sacred Text, is to read the several parts of the Bible with a due regard to the state of knowledge and the peculiar opinions, religious and philosophical, which distinguished the age in which they were written ; and also to interpret the language used by the inspired authors, not according to our more extended views of nature and of the Divine Economy, but with a strict undeviating reference to the ancient belief and modes of reasoning to which they were accustomed. On all points unconnected with revelation, we must consent to admit that the Prophets and Apostles continued as ignorant as they were before they were made the instruments of Divine communication. In regard to the constitution of the solar system, for example, or the chemical properties of matter, their knowledge was not more extensive than that which was enjoyed by the rest of their countrymen. Hence they are found to speak

of the firmament as of a brilliant canopy stretched over the earth, which might be drawn aside like a curtain or rolled up like a garment. St Peter describes it as passing away, or rushing aside, with a great noise, and even as being burnt up or purified by fire, in the last conflagration. It is obvious, therefore, that the gift of Inspiration did not extend to such matters; and, moreover, that the Spirit of God did not preclude the Apostles from mixing up with sacred truths those speculations on natural subjects in which the human mind, even in its least improved condition, delights to expatiate.

Nay, in inquiries of a more elevated description, we find St Paul introducing what may be called the spiritual physiology of the Pharisaical doctors. When reasoning on the resurrection of the dead, he draws from the theory of belief which had been long established among the Rabbis, an answer to the sceptical question pressed by the philosophers at Corinth, "with what body do they come?" It was the opinion of certain Masters in Israel, that the flesh and blood which compose the

mortal part of man would, at a certain period in the economy of Grace, put on a covering of incorruptibility, which would protect it for ever from the operation of those causes which produce decay and dissolution in our present frame. As corn is thrown into the ground deprived of its chaff or shell, but afterwards comes up covered with these integuments, so it was imagined that the body of man, before its resurrection, would undergo a change somewhat analogous, and be clothed with incorruptibility as with an outer garment.—“Thou sowest not,” says he, “that body that shall be, but bare (or naked) grain, but God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.” In like manner, or in a way somewhat similar, the corruptible body of man was to put on incorruptibility, and the mortal part to put on immortality.* Hence we may understand

* The following sentence from Tertullian may be taken as a commentary on the doctrine of the Apostle :—“*Demutati in atomo in angelicam substantiam, scilicet per illud incorruptelae superindumentum, transferemur in coeleste regnum :*” that is,—being changed in a moment into the substance of

the desire expressed in another place by the same Apostle, in the name of his Christian brethren, to be clothed upon with the heavenly house ; “ not,” he adds, “ that we would be unclothed, but *clothed upon*, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”*

Such expressions, as well as those already mentioned, must be interpreted according to the learning which prevailed in the age of the Apostles, and more especially among the teachers from whom St Paul acquired his erudition. On any other

angels, namely, by that putting-on of incorruptibility, we shall be removed into the heavenly kingdom.—*De Spe Fidelium*. See Bishop of Lincoln's *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, and Mosheim *de Rebus Christianis ante Constantinum*. *Seculum tertium*, c. 38.

* The word *δικητηριον* means literally a small habitation or dwelling, and is here used to denote that clothing of incorruption which the human body was understood to assume before entering into the heavenly kingdom. Schleusner translates it “ *corpus nostrum immortale et maxime praestans, quo a Deo, post hanc vitam, instruemur.*”

Cicero, in his *Tusculan Questions*, expresses a similar idea, “ *posse animos, quum e corporibus excesserint in coelum, quasi in domicilium suum, pervenire.*”

ground, it is utterly impossible that they shall be understood, or even freed from an impenetrable obscurity. In this case, as in all the others, we are called upon to make a distinction between the doctrine itself, and the means which are employed to assist the comprehension of an illiterate people, or to silence the objections of an unbelieving sect. The preaching of immortality is the glory of our religion, the object, indeed, by which it was distinguished from all other systems of faith when it was first given to the world. But our belief in this majestic tenet is not necessarily connected with the metaphorical illustrations even of an inspired writer, who manifestly borrowed from the Jewish schools an opinion, which had probably reached his times on the current of tradition, and applied it in the course of his argument with a sceptical people, in order to throw light upon a mystery, concerning which he had received no special revelation as a Christian minister.

Should any one object to the view which is now given of the effect of previous acquirements upon the mode in which certain subjects are

treated by the inspired writers, let it be remembered, that we are here proceeding upon the ground of facts, and not of mere hypothesis ; and that our proper business is, not to explain the connexion between supernatural gifts and ordinary knowledge when applied to the elucidation of Scriptural truth, but solely to determine the limits of their operation as they bear upon the articles of our creed. It does not admit of a reasonable doubt, that many of the subordinate tenets incorporated in St Paul's arguments with the Jews were held by the members of the synagogue and of the church in common ; and being of Rabbinical origin, they are, consequently, not entitled to the full measure of faith which belongs to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. On this ground, I repeat, that while we cleave to the sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life on the sole authority of Him who died for our sins and rose again for our justification, we may yet exercise a less restricted inquiry into the particular notions respecting the resurrection of the body,—the putting on of incorruptibility,—“ *illud incorruptelae*

superindumentum,"—which were entertained by the doctors of the older religion.

The learned author who first remarked that St Paul wrote *ex mente Pharisaiorum*,—according to the principles of the Pharisees,—supplied a key wherewith may be opened all the darker parts of his reasoning on election, justification, free grace, and also on the resurrection of the body. To those who have not been taught to study through this medium, the Epistles of that distinguished servant of Christ, there must still appear many things hard to be understood; while to the unlearned the same things will ever prove a stumbling-block, and susceptible, too, of a ready perversion, so far even as to destroy their happiness upon earth and all their hopes of heaven. It is more than probable, that St Peter himself, who had never sat at the feet of any Gamaliel, nor laid up in his mind the traditions of the Fathers, did not completely comprehend the profounder arguments which his brother Apostle addressed to the Gentiles; and that the obscurity of which he complained, as hurtful to others, had been occasionally

experienced in his own person, when called upon to expound the learned allusions which occur in several of the Catholic Epistles.

4. In like manner, it will be found of great use, in interpreting the New Testament, to make due allowance for the ignorance, on all other subjects beyond the essential doctrines of the Gospel, under which it pleased Divine Providence to allow the Apostles to continue, even after the miraculous endowments of Pentecost. Our Lord promised, that, by means of his Holy Spirit, they should be led into all the truth, and have all things brought to their remembrance whatsoever he had taught them ; but he promised not, that, in things which have no immediate connexion with the faith and practice of the Christian life, they should have any degree of knowledge supernaturally communicated to them, or that they should be made wiser than their uninspired brethren, in respect to the secrets of Nature, or the works of men.

For these reasons, we must not be surprised to find them as much in the dark as the rest of the

world in relation to those chronological inquiries which had long employed the ingenuity of the Rabbi and the speculation of the Scribe ; and on the faith of which they had ventured to predict the era of the new heaven and the new earth, when all terrestrial things, in their present form at least, were to be brought to a close. Respecting the wonders of the latter days, the sign of the second advent, and the condition of the renovated globe, the Apostles were not better informed than the other descendants of Jacob. Nor is it altogether unreasonable to believe, that as they were intentionally kept in ignorance respecting the future history of mankind and the arrival of the day of judgment, their hopes and fears were partly affected by the impressions which prevailed in their own time and country in regard to the end of the world,—an event which, at that period, was supposed to be rapidly approaching. That such feelings extended very generally among the Christian converts of that early age, is manifest, not only from the writings of St Paul, but also from the annals of the Church and the commentaries of the

most ancient Fathers; and that the inspired penmen were themselves entirely exempted from the various emotions with which such a crisis could not fail to be anticipated, is a conclusion which no divine has ventured to maintain. But this fact might be admitted without in the smallest degree impeaching that knowledge of spiritual things, bestowed upon them by the Holy Ghost, which we justly regard as the ground of our faith, and the warrant for all our doctrinal institutes.

Such concessions, so far from weakening the foundations of Apostolical authority, will be found, when properly considered, to add to them no small degree of strength. We shall thereby wrest a weapon from the hand of infidelity. For instance, it has been a practice with sceptical writers to trace to the page of inspiration the origin of certain opinions which were afterwards perverted by injudicious Christians, and thereby to suggest an inference unfavourable to the credibility of the Holy Scriptures at large. Belief in the Millennium, including the personal reign of Christ upon earth and the triumph of his saints, has,

in this way, been charged upon the easy faith of the Apostles ; and the Christian world has accordingly been insulted with the taunting question, whether men who participated so deeply in a popular prejudice are entitled to implicit confidence when they propound the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel ? In reply to such an insinuation, we would at once admit, that, except in regard to the truths of Christianity, which they were specially commissioned and qualified to teach, the Apostles were not supplied by the Divine Spirit with any degree of knowledge which they did not formerly possess ; and moreover, that, even after the day of Pentecost, they continued to retain many of their former impressions respecting things not essentially connected with the main object of their appointment. It is by no means clear, indeed, that St Paul expected the second advent of the Redeemer during the existence of the generation in which he himself lived. On the contrary, strong reasons might be urged to prove that he did not entertain such an opinion. But, even if it were necessary to concede this point, respecting which he had not re-

ceived any supernatural information, his authority as to all matters of faith, properly so called, would not be in the slightest degree affected. Such notions I would place on the same footing as the belief, common in his days, that the earth remains fixed, while the sun revolves around it, and that the starry heavens bore some resemblance to the ceiling of a room or the roof of a tent.

In the Discourse on the Millennium I have availed myself very freely of the principle now stated. As it cannot be denied that the expectation of a great event, involving even the change of all earthly things, was very generally entertained in the Apostolic age, and supported, too, by the supposed authority of the Sacred Writers, it becomes necessary to define the boundaries of inspiration, so as to protect the essential doctrines of the Gospel, while we admit the use of Jewish learning and tradition for the purposes of illustration and argument. The assistance which our Lord promised to his disciples did not extend to all subjects, but simply to *the Truth* which he had revealed, and which he commanded them to

teach ; and so gradually was this supernatural aid supplied, and in a proportion so strictly commensurate with the necessities of their mission, that several years had passed after the visible descent of the Holy Ghost, before they were enabled to understand the catholic spirit and objects of Christianity. As it is stated elsewhere, St Peter had long been an Apostle before he knew that the privileges of the Gospel were to be extended to the Gentiles.

5. Further, in order to understand the precise import of the Epistles, we must place ourselves in the situation of the persons to whom they were addressed ; read them as much as possible with their eyes ; and view their contents through the medium of the knowledge which was at that time possessed, and even of the prejudices which were then entertained. It would be an idle question to determine whether the Apostles, in writing to churches and individuals in their own days, had any respect to the edification of distant ages ; but, as a rule of interpretation, it may be expedient to consider the several letters which have come down to us as

having been suggested by the peculiar circumstances of those societies to which they were sent, and, of course, as having a special reference to their wants, their errors, and their dangers. As far, indeed, as the general doctrines of Christianity are inculcated, we have as great an interest in the Epistles of St Paul as could be felt by the converts at Rome, Corinth, or Galatia. But it is manifest, at the same time, that, if we peruse them without having a constant regard to the peculiarities which attended their composition, we shall not only fail to appreciate their meaning, but draw from them conclusions altogether inconsistent with the analogy of faith. We shall, in that case, throw a cloud over the clearest parts of the Divine Counsel, and extract poison from the fairest flowers in the garden of celestial wisdom and of spiritual knowledge.

It may appear objectionable in the estimation of certain readers to suppose that any part of the Sacred Volume was confined to the men of a particular age, and that there should be large portions of it which cannot be applied to us in these

latter days, unless by means of accommodation, and in a secondary and very qualified sense. But the Epistles contained in the New Testament would be different from all other compositions of the same kind, if they had not a particular respect to the persons and opinions concerning which they were written ; and hence it follows, that, in proportion as our circumstances are unlike to those in which the primitive Christians were placed, the descriptions of the Inspired Authors will be inapplicable at the present day.

6. Having, by a careful study of the original text and the antiquities of the Jewish nation, ascertained the doctrine taught in the Apostolical writings, we ought to restrict our conclusions to the precise import of that doctrine, as it was understood by those to whom it was first delivered. From no quarter has so much perplexity arisen as from the practice adopted by too many modern divines, of associating the tenets of the Christian Faith with the dogmas of philosophy. For example, the simple view of predestination exhibited by St Paul has been obscured and dis-

torted in the highest degree, by connecting it with the discussions which had long occupied the Pagan schools on the subject of free will and Divine foreknowledge. The doctrine of election, even in its narrowest and most exclusive sense, has been supported on a similar basis. In the writings of the later Calvinists, indeed, the authority of the Gospel is rendered subservient to the deductions of metaphysical speculation. The statements of St Paul are interpreted through the medium of some ingenious theory, illustrating the springs of human action, the power of motives, and the relation between cause and effect. In short, the Apostle is made a philosopher, according to the views of a particular sect; and his doctrines, instead of being received on the ground of the learning and opinions which prevailed among the Rabbim of his own day, are not unfrequently recommended on the authority of modern authors.

7. A rule paramount to every other in expounding the Sacred Writings is never to give countenance to any conclusion which is clearly inconsistent with the revealed attributes of the Almighty.

“ In all your sermons and discourses,” said Jeremy Taylor to his clergy, “ speak nothing of God but what is honourable and glorious ; and impute not to him such things, the consequents of which a wise and good man will not own.” If, then, the hypothetical inferences of a theological system should happen to lead one way, and the necessary deductions from the Divine Wisdom and Goodness should infallibly conduct us in an opposite direction, we ought not to hesitate as to our choice ; because we may be assured that the former, being inconsistent with the fundamental principles of all religion, must be founded in error, and supported by a false interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

No better illustration of this remark could be selected than may be derived from the popular notion of election as compared with the doctrine on that subject which is actually taught by the Inspired Writers. That the Almighty should enlighten one portion of the globe at an earlier period than He bestows the same blessing upon other parts of it, is a fact which can be easily reconciled

with the general principles of his moral government, and does not imply any striking deviation from that Benignity which is good alike to all, and has no respect of persons. But that the all-wise and most gracious Creator of heaven and earth should, from all eternity, elect a few favourites to everlasting happiness, while he consigned the great majority of the human race to never-ending torment; and should yet invite all men to salvation, and declare that he desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live;—these are propositions which cannot be admitted without impeaching the essential qualities of the Divine Nature, and destroying the confidence of all his intellectual creatures. On such subjects we cannot, indeed, avoid difficulties, but we may avoid contradiction: we cannot comprehend the ulterior objects of that grand system of which Christianity constitutes an important part, but we may see enough to be satisfied that they were conceived in benevolence, and that they will be accomplished by means worthy of their origin.

In such a case the divine should imitate the anatomist and the natural philosopher, and limit his conclusions by the extent of his actual knowledge. So far as science can proceed, the evidence is increased, at every step, of a goodness, a wisdom, and a foresight which pass all comprehension ; and when it can proceed no farther in its discoveries, but meets with numerous facts which admit of no explanation on all the principles hitherto ascertained, the student of nature does not imagine that he has reached the boundaries of Divine power and benevolence. On the contrary, he assures himself that what he does not see is not less wonderful and glorious than the things which have been submitted to his investigation ; and that there is nothing wanting to him but an enlargement of his opportunities and means, in order to obtain still more magnificent views of that stupendous system of causes and effects which fills the heavens and the earth, and stretches from everlasting to everlasting.

DISCOURSE I.

ON THE MILLENNIUM.

1 PETER iii. 15. *Be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.*

AT no time since our blessed Saviour appeared upon earth has the admonition conveyed in my text been more necessary to the Christian world than at the present moment, when every subject that can disturb the belief of the ignorant, or perplex the minds of those who to their faith have added some degree of knowledge, is studiously brought forward and made the topic of popular discussion. Among the revived heresies and doubtful disputations which, in these days, occupy so large a share of public attention, the doctrine

of the Millennium holds a prominent place, and has, during several years, given employment to no small portion of learning and talent in both divisions of the United Kingdom. As the hopes and fears connected with this inquiry carry with them into every sincere mind an intense degree of interest, having a reference, indeed, to the most awful events which shall ever befall this terrestrial scene, it becomes expedient to investigate the grounds upon which the prevailing opinions concerning it are understood to rest, and thereby to determine how far the common notions of millennial blessedness are entitled to the acceptation of a Christian audience. In pursuing this important object, we will endeavour,

In the first place, to trace the history of the doctrine in question, as we find it recorded in the writings of ancient authors, both before and after the era of human redemption ; and,

In the second place, to describe the modifications which it has undergone, the objects to which it points, and the reasoning by which it is supported, in the present day ; and,

In the third place, to take a brief review of its practical tendency, as illustrated by the history of the Church in different ages, and more especially by the opinions which have been entertained in our own country, in times comparatively recent.

I. In most cases, the history of an opinion affords the best explanation of its import, as well as of the authority on which it has been received by successive generations. With respect to the Millennium, indeed, it must be acknowledged that the doctrine concerning it stretches back into an antiquity so remote and obscure, that it is impossible to fix its origin or to define the grounds upon which it first became an article of belief or of speculation. The tradition, that the earth as well as the moral and religious state of its inhabitants were to undergo a great change at the end of six thousand years, has been detected in the writings of Pagans, Jews, and Christians. It is found in the most ancient of those commentaries on the Old Testament which we owe to the learning of the Rabbinical school ; and, although the

arguments by which it is recommended to our belief will not make a deep impression upon any intelligent reader, they nevertheless leave no room for doubt that the notion of a Millennium preceded by several centuries the introduction of the Christian Faith.

For example, because, in the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which, when used as a numeral, denotes a thousand, happens to occur six times, it was inferred by the Cabalists, that this portion of the visible universe was to terminate, or at least to suffer a complete change, when six millennial periods should have performed their revolution. Again, because six days were employed by Almighty God in the creation of this globe, after which he rested on the seventh ; and as with Him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day ; it was concluded by the same class of divines, that the world was to continue only six thousand years, and that, upon the completion of this period, there would succeed a Sabbath of corresponding length,—a Millennium

of rest, and peace, and of uninterrupted enjoyment.

It is not a little remarkable, that a belief of this singular notion has been traced in the Sibylline Oracles, in the poems of Hesiod, in the work ascribed to Darius Hystaspes the king of the Medes, and in the writings of Hermes Trismegistus, the celebrated founder of Egyptian learning and science. Plato quotes from Orpheus the same mystical doctrine ; thus handing down to more recent times the conviction of the earlier generations of the human race, that the earth which had been given to them for a habitation was to continue in its present form during only six millennial ages, and was doomed in the seventh to be dissolved, or at least purified by fire, and thereby rendered fit for the residence of a more refined order of beings. The Great Year of the ancient philosophers seems to have had a reference to the same mysterious event. The orb which we inhabit was regarded by them as a thing which would grow old, and which might stand in need of renovation. Even to the eye of science there appeared certain indica-

tions of an established order in physical events, which, in due course, would restore the pristine vigour of the elements, and bring back to Nature the harmony, which, it was generally imagined, had been lost or interrupted. The number seven was associated in the minds of ancient sages with ideas of a sacred and emblematical character; and on this ground it was expected, that, when six thousand years of toil and disorder should have passed away, the seventh millennium would usher in a happier series of events, re-establish the equilibrium of the heavenly bodies, invest our earth with a more genial atmosphere, renew in its soil the original powers of fertility, and cover its surface with scenes of imperishable beauty and delight.*

It is no part of my undertaking to determine how far the wise men who flourished in the Pagan nations of the ancient world borrowed from the Jews of their own age, or whether they drew all

* See Note A in Appendix.

their materials from the streams of a tradition still nearer the original fountain of knowledge. It is sufficient to have stated, upon grounds which no competent judge will call in question, the opinion which prevailed long before the birth of Christ, relative to a momentous change which was supposed to await the earth after the lapse of a determined period, not exceeding six thousand years. We find this expectation expressed by Chaldeans, Persians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, by orators, by poets, and by philosophers; and the only difficulty we experience in this examination of records, collected from the literature of ages and of nations at once so remote and unconnected, is to account for so great a unanimity of sentiment where we cannot discover any common source of information, nor any authority which so many different writers would consent to acknowledge in a conclusion of such extreme importance.*

* Plutarch has preserved two notices from an ancient author which tend to confirm the above statement. Theopompus,

Perhaps we might be justified in ascribing some part of the impression now mentioned to certain sublime passages in the Jewish Scriptures, which, whatever might be their more recondite meaning, were unquestionably understood by many expositors in a literal sense, and as holding out the promise of a great change in the constitution of the physical universe. “Behold, I create *new heavens and a new earth*: and the former ones shall not be remembered, neither shall they be brought to mind any more. But ye shall rejoice and exult in the *age to come*, which I create; for lo! I create Jerusalem a subject of joy, and her

who flourished about 340 years before Christ, relates, that the Persian Magi taught that the present state of things would continue six thousand years; after which *Hades*, or Death, would be destroyed, and men would be happy and live without food, and become so spiritualized that their bodies would cast no shadow.

It was also the opinion of Zoroaster, the founder of the Magian Religion, that the earth, after the general dissolution and destruction of Arimanius, or Satan, would be all a plain, and make one city, wherein men would live together in a happy state, and all use one language.—*Plut. de Isid. et Osir.* p. 370.

people of gladness: And I will exult in Jerusalem, and rejoice in my people. And there shall not be heard any more therein the voice of weeping nor the sound of a distressful cry. No more shall there be an infant short-lived, nor an old man who hath not fulfilled his days: For he that dieth at a hundred years old shall die a boy; and the sinner that dieth at a hundred years shall be deemed accursed. As the days of a tree shall be the days of my people; and they shall wear out the works of their own hands. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox: as for the serpent, dust shall be his food. They shall not hurt, neither shall they destroy, in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah.”*

The opinion of the ancient Jews on this head may be gathered from the statement of one of their Rabbis, who said, “the world endures six thousand years, and in one thousand it shall be

* Isaiah lxxv. 17. Bishop Lowth's Translation.

laid waste, (that is, the enemies of God shall be destroyed,) whereof it is spoken in Isaiah, second chapter, eleventh verse, *the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.*" Tradition, it is added by the commentator who quotes the above passage, corroborates the doctrine of the Rabbi; for "as out of every seventh year the seventh is the year of remission, so out of the seven thousand years of the world the seventh Millennium shall be the Millennium of remission, that *God alone may be exalted in that day.*" It was in like manner the tradition of the house of Elias, a holy man who lived about two hundred years before Christ, that "the world was to endure six thousand years, and that the righteous whom God should raise up would not be turned again into dust." That by this resuscitation he meant a resurrection prior to the Millennium is manifest from what follows:—"If you inquire how it shall be with the just in those thousand years wherein the blessed and holy God shall renew his world, whereof it is said, that *the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day*; you must know that the

holy and blessed God will give them wings as it were of eagles that they may fly upon the face of the waters ; whence it is said in the forty-sixth Psalm, *therefore will we not be afraid when the earth shall be changed ;* and in Isaiah, fortieth chapter, and thirty-first verse, *they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles."*

It is worthy of remark, that the two ancient authors whose words have just been quoted, speak of the seventh Millennium as *that day*,—the day in which God alone shall be exalted, and in which he is to renew the world,—proceeding on the figure of speech already fully recognized in the language of Jewish theology, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

But whatever might be the origin of the anticipation so fondly cherished both by Jews and Pagans, before the advent of our Saviour, in regard to a happy change in the natural and moral constitution of things, it is manifest that the hope of such a consummation was not superseded by

his residence upon earth, nor by the promises which he made to his disciples in relation to a more perfect state of existence hereafter. The first Christians, on the contrary, looked with a more earnest desire for the new heavens and the new earth promised to their fathers, and connected their expectation too with the ancient opinion, that this globe was to undergo a material change at the end of six thousand years ; throwing off all the imperfections which had arisen from the guilt of its inhabitants, and being fitted for the habitation of justice, benevolence, and purity, during a blessed Millennium—the Sabbath of this terrestrial world.

In the works of Clement and Barnabas we find unquestionable proofs that the expectation of a thousand years of tranquil enjoyment had descended to these holy men from their Jewish masters. The latter, for example, who has been described as the first depositary of the doctrine of St Paul, and who was certainly his companion and fellow-labourer in the Gospel, presents to us, in a commentary on the twentieth chapter of

Exodus, the following views in regard to the mystical meaning of the word Sabbath:—“ *And God made in six days the works of his hands; and he finished them on the seventh day, and he rested the seventh day and sanctified it. Consider, my children, what that signifies, he finished them in six days. The meaning of it is this, that in six thousand years the Lord God will bring all things to an end. For with him one day is a thousand years, as himself testifieth, saying, Behold this day shall be as a thousand years. Therefore, children, in six days, that is, in six thousand years, shall all things be accomplished. And what is that he saith, And he rested the seventh day? He meaneth this, that when his Son shall come and abolish the season of the Wicked One, and judge the ungodly, and shall change the sun, the moon, and the stars, then shall he rest gloriously in that seventh day.*”*

Justin Martyr entertained similar views re-

* Catholic Epistle of St Barnabas, section 15.

specting the Millennium. In his second dialogue with Trypho the Jew, he represents his antagonist as putting to him the following question:—"Tell me truly, do you Christians indeed agree in the belief that Jerusalem shall be built again, and that your people shall be gathered together there and rejoice with Christ, together with the patriarchs and the prophets, and such of our nation as shall become converts to your faith before the coming of your Christ; or do you only maintain such opinions, that you may have the credit of searching the Scriptures more profoundly than we do?" Justin replies, "I have already acknowledged that I and many others are of this mind, and that we do expect such things to happen, as you yourself perfectly understand; but I have also intimated to you, that many Christians of a pure and pious judgment in other matters do not concur in this conclusion. In regard, again, to some who are called Christians, but who, in fact, are atheists and impious heretics, I have freely told you that they teach things wholly blasphemous, atheistical, and absurd. If, there-

fore, you have had any intercourse with such nominal Christians, and find that they do not believe the doctrine I have mentioned, but even proceed so far in their wickedness as to blaspheme the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; maintaining that there is no resurrection of the dead, but that the souls of men, immediately after the body dies, are received into heaven—do not consider them as true disciples of Christ, nor take your opinion of the Gospel from their mouths. But I and all Christians who are completely orthodox, are convinced that there will be a resurrection of the flesh, and a thousand years spent in Jerusalem, after being rebuilt, adorned, and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah, and others, have unanimously foretold. For thus Isaiah hath spoken concerning that period of a thousand years: There shall be a new heaven and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, neither shall they come into mind; but they shall find joy and gladness in that which I create; for I will make Jerusalem a rejoicing, and my people gladness; and I will rejoice on account

of Jerusalem, and delight myself in my people ; and there shall no longer be heard the voice of wailing, nor the cry of distress. They shall build houses, and inhabit them ; they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.”—“ A certain man among us,” he adds, “ whose name was John, one of the twelve Apostles of Christ, in a revelation made to him, did prophesy that the faithful believers in our Christ should live a thousand years in Jerusalem ; and that, after the lapse of this period, the universal, and, I may say, the eternal, resurrection of all mankind will take place together with the general judgment.”*

Irenæus, in like manner, supported the doctrine of the Millennium. He refers his readers to Papias, an author who lived in the time of the Apostles, and who was intimately acquainted with the disciples and companions of those holy men ; maintaining that the opinions which he held in relation to the second advent of Christ had been

* Just. Martyr. Op. p. 310—315.

bequeathed to the church by the immediate followers of the Redeemer. There is no doubt that Papias himself expected, and taught others to expect, a corporeal reign of Jesus Christ upon earth. It is equally manifest, from the writings of Irenæus, that, in this respect, he agreed with the great body of Christians in the second century, who had adopted that particular interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures upon which the bodily presence of the Messias was made an article of popular belief. This remark is fully justified by the gross ideas which he allowed to mix with his spiritual visions of the renovated world; following too literally the doctrines of the Rabbinical commentators, who anticipated in their new Jerusalem every delight which could gratify the senses, and even call forth the spirit of voluptuousness.

Tertullian, who lived in the beginning of the third century, professes his belief of the reign or kingdom promised to the Saints upon earth; of their resurrection for a thousand years; of their living in the new Jerusalem, and enjoying therein all manner of delights; and of the general

judgment and destruction of the world at the end of the Millennium.

Not to increase the number of authorities beyond due bounds, I shall only add the opinion of Lactantius, who lived in the early part of the fourth century. He remarks, that “because all the works of God were finished in six days, it is necessary that the world should remain in its present state six ages, that is, six thousand years.” And, again, “because having finished the works of creation, he rested on the seventh day and blessed it, it is therefore necessary that, at the end of the sixth Millennium, all wickedness should be rooted out of the earth, and that righteousness should reign a thousand years.”—“When the Son of God shall have destroyed injustice and restored the good to life, he will sojourn among men a thousand years, and rule them with a most righteous government. At the same time the prince of the devils shall be bound with chains, and kept in restraint during the thousand years of the celestial government, in which justice shall prevail throughout the whole world, lest he

should attempt any evil against the people of God.” —“ When the thousand years of the heavenly kingdom upon earth shall have expired, that is, seven thousand years from the creation of the world, Satan shall be loosed again.” And, “ when the thousand years shall be completed, then shall take place that second and public resurrection of all, when the unjust shall be raised to everlasting torments. This,” he concludes, “ is the doctrine of the holy prophets which we Christians follow ; this is our wisdom or philosophy.”

We have seen that the notion of a thousand years of peace and happiness to be enjoyed by the better portion of the human race, before the end of the world, was entertained by the Jews and other nations long prior to the era of the Gospel ; and also that it was held by the primitive Christians on similar grounds, and with expectations very little different from those which were cherished by the disciples of the philosophers and the Rabbis. The general doctrine was, that six ages, or Millenniums, were to be consumed in toil and anxiety, bearing a resemblance to the six days

spent by the Almighty in creation ; and that these were to be succeeded by one Millennium of rest and enjoyment, corresponding to the Sabbath which followed the exertion of Omnipotence, when the heavens and the earth were formed in the beginning of time. It will appear, too, from the quotations which I am about to make, that the Christians who lived in the first, second, and third centuries really believed that the sixth Millennium was far advanced, and, consequently, that the great change which was to usher in the new heaven and the new earth might very soon be expected.

Hippolitus, a Christian writer, who flourished about the commencement of the third century, warns his flock that the time of Antichrist could not now be far distant, as “ six thousand years from the creation of the world were already accomplished.”*

Hesychius, who is supposed to have been a

* Apud Photium. ὥσανει των ἀπο πρωτης του κοσμου καταβολης ἑξακισχιλιων ἐτων συντελουμενων.

contemporary of St Jerome, states, in a discourse which he left on the birth of Christ, that, agreeably to the doctrine of the Church of Antioch, “the incarnation of the Redeemer took place nearly six thousand years from the foundation of the world.” He reminds his reader, that “from Adam to the patriarch Phaleg, the son of Eber, were three thousand years; and that from the same era to the forty-second year of the Emperor Augustus there intervened five thousand nine hundred and sixty-seven years.” Hence, if we include the thirty-three years during which our blessed Saviour sojourned among men, the whole interval from the creation to the death of that Divine person will be found to comprehend exactly six thousand years.*

St Cyprian, in like manner, in his Tract on the Encouragement to Martyrdom, impresses on the recollection of his people, that “they were now in the end and completion of the world, and that

* Homil. in Natal. apud Cangium in Chron. Paschal. et Pezron Défense de l'Antiquité.

the fatal times of Antichrist were at hand ;” adding, that “ six thousand years were already almost fulfilled since the Devil made his first assault on man ; and that the evil spirit, from his long practice, had learned all the arts of temptation, and all the wiles by which the human being could most effectually be deprived of his faith and virtue.”*

Origen, too, in one of his dialogues, asserts, that “ our Lord descended from heaven, for the salvation of man, six thousand years after the Almighty had framed the human race.”†

Ambrose, proceeding upon the same grounds, makes manifest, in his Exposition of the Gospel according to St Luke, that he also had adopted the conclusions of his age relative to the duration of the world. When commenting on the transfiguration of the Redeemer, he lays a considerable emphasis on the statement of St Matthew, who

* *De Exhortatione Martyrii*, “ Sex millia annorum pene complentur ex quo hominum Diabolus impugnat.”

† Dialog. contra Marcion.

observes, that, *after six days, he taketh Peter, James, and John, up into a high mountain apart.* “In regard to this notice,” says the venerable Father, “we may remark, that *it was after six thousand years ; for a thousand years are in the sight of the Lord as one day.* But now more than six thousand years are counted, namely, from the foundation of the world.”

But that I may not fatigue the patience of the reader by numerous references to authors whose works are consulted only by the learned, it may be sufficient to state, that, prior to the close of the second century, there is no writer to be found who did not inherit the opinions which prevailed, in the time of the Apostles and of their immediate successors, relative to the period which had elapsed between the creation of Adam and the birth of Christ. In the following age, indeed, we begin to perceive symptoms of change in the leading systems of chronology, and an attempt to accommodate the authority of tradition to the actual state of things. The expected Millennium was still delayed ; and hence it appeared necessary to

examine more attentively into the language of Scripture, and to calculate with greater precision the several epochs which are recorded in the inspired annals of the Jewish Church. Julius Africanus, accordingly, who wrote about the year 221 of our era, is the first who reduced the period stated above—the interval between Adam and the Redeemer—to 5500 years,—a conclusion which appears to have been readily received by nearly all the learned Christians of his day, particularly in the provinces of Greece and of Asia Minor.

The name of Lactantius has been already mentioned as one of those Fathers of the fourth century, who maintained that the world, in its present form, was not to subsist beyond six thousand years ; at the end of which period the human race was doomed to witness the consummation of all earthly things, and the commencement of a new order of moral and intellectual natures. He adds, that “ those who have devoted themselves to the science of time have ascertained with sufficient accuracy when this renovation is to take place, guid-

ing their inquiries by the knowledge which is presented to them in the Holy Books, and other historical records of former ages, wherein is contained the number of years assigned for the duration of the globe." He admitted, indeed, that there appeared some diversity in the sentiments of the ablest writers on this subject; but, upon the whole, he thought himself justified in pronouncing that the earth, as now constituted, was not to last more than two hundred years after his own time.*

In this computation, the Christian Cicero, as, on account of his eloquence, he was sometimes called, proceeds on the fact, proved or assumed by Julius Africanus, that the world had existed five thousand five hundred years before the incarnation of the Saviour. The Divine Institutions, in the seventh book of which the calculation now re-

* Quando tamen compleatur hæc summa (6000) docent ii qui de temporibus scripserunt, colligentes ex litteris sacris et ex variis historiis, quantus sit numerus annorum ab exordio mundi. Qui licet varient, et aliquantum numeri eorum summa dissentiat, omnis tamen expectatio non amplius quam ducentorum videtur annorum.—*Lactan. Divin. Institu. lib. vii.*

ferred to is contained, were written about A. D. 320 ; which date, added to 5500, makes, according to the hypothesis on which the chronology of Africanus was founded, 5820 years from the creation of the world to the reign of the Emperor Constantine, the period in which the author flourished. Hence we perceive the facts as well as the principle on which his expectation rested, that the earth would continue to be the habitation of sinful men only two hundred years longer.

It is worthy of remark in passing, that the calculation of Julian the African retained its authority, among the Oriental Christians at least, till the close of the seventh century. As a proof of this, we find in the records of a synod, held in the capital of the Eastern empire in the year of our Lord 691, that the fathers of the church continued to adjust their dates by a reference to his system. The acts of that celebrated Convocation, distinguished by the appellation of *Synodus in Trullo*, relate that its members assembled in the imperial city of Constantinople, in the year of the world 6199,—an epoch which assumes that five thou-

sand five hundred and eight years had elapsed before the birth of Christ.

Eusebius, the Bishop of Cæsarea, who wrote a short time after Lactantius, thought proper to diminish the interval between the creation and the era of redemption to 5200 years,—a result which was adopted by many of the Western churches, but resolutely opposed by those of the Lesser Asia, Arabia, and Egypt. This preference of the shorter period manifested by the Latins may be traced to the following circumstance :—St Jerome, it is well known, translated into the language of Italy the celebrated *Chronicon* of the Bishop just named, and even wrote a continuation of it down to his own time, which was about the year 378: and as this Father had already risen into high esteem among the clergy of the Roman communion, he possessed influence enough to recommend to their approbation the chronological system upon which his industry had been so long employed. In this way we are enabled to account for the small discrepancy which appears in the dates followed by Christian authors in the subsequent

ages, according as they happened to write on the eastern or on the western shore of the Adriatic. The Greeks still adhered to the numbers of Julius Africanus, which placed the birth of Christ in the middle of the sixth Millennium ; while the Latin Church yielded to what was thought the better authority of Eusebius and St Jerome, who, as has been already observed, believed that the Redeemer appeared in the flesh about the year of the world 5200.

We find that, in the days of Abulfaragius, who wrote his History of the Dynasties towards the end of the thirteenth century, no change had been introduced by the Oriental Christians into the ancient chronology. “ From the beginning of the world to the Messiah,” says he, “ according to the computation of the Law in the Septuagint version, which is in the hands of the Greeks and of all the other Christian sects, the Syrians excepted, the number of years is about five thousand five hundred and eighty-six.” But it is still more remarkable, that the same principle of computation continues in use among the Greeks,

Copts, Abyssinians, Armenians, Ethiopians, and Georgians, at the present day. The Russians, too, who received their religion from the Greek Church about the end of the tenth century, retain still the chronological data with which its early history is associated.

In a word the current of opinion concerning the age of the world continued uniform, during several centuries, over the whole Christian Church. Augustin, it is true, departed so far from the authority of Jerome as to introduce into the line of the postdiluvian Patriarchs the name of the second Cainan, and thereby to add to the interval between the Flood and the birth of Abraham not less than a hundred and thirty years ; extending, consequently, the period from Adam to Christ to 5330 years. But his views, it is obvious, were all along regulated by the very same principles which appear to have determined the limits of all chronological inquiry in those early ages. Even in the beginning of the fifth century, the date at which he lived, we observe him using the same language which filled the mouths of the Chris-

tians, while as yet the Apostles and their companions were upon the earth ; assuring his auditors that the sixth Millennium was already far advanced, and that at the close of it a great change awaited the physical as well as the religious condition of mankind. He opposes himself to those who maintained what he deemed heretical opinions on the history of the cosmogony ; reminding the pious persons whom he addressed, that “ from the first man, who was called Adam, six thousand years were not yet completed ;” and declaring, that “ the writers who denied this certain and unquestionable truth deserved not to be reasoned with, but to be treated with contempt.”* According to the views held by this Father, about three-fourths of the sixth millennial age of the world must, in his time, have been exhausted ; for, if to 5200, the era of the Nativity, we add 130 years for the generation of Cainan, and 420

* August. de Civitat. Dic. lib. xviii. c. 40. Ab ipso primo homine, qui est appellatus Adam, nondum sex millia annorum compleantur, &c.

for the year of our Lord at which Augustin wrote his Divine Commonwealth, the total sum will amount to 5750, reckoning from the Creation. Hence his expression becomes perfectly intelligible, that “ he lived in the sixth Millennium, the latter portion of which was now passing away.”*

The African Bishop was followed in the path of chronology by Paulus Orosius and Prosper Aquitanus, who, in their turn, were succeeded by Gregory of Tours, Isidorus archbishop of Seville, by Paul the deacon, by Ninius, by Martinus Polonus, by Matthæus Palmerius, by Joannes Naclerus, and other distinguished writers ; all of whom adopted the chronology of the Septuagint, and maintained, of consequence, the ancient opinion, that the Saviour of the world was born in the course of the sixth Millennium.

It was not, indeed, till the eighth century that the statement of the modern Jews, relative to the time of the Redeemer's birth, found any accept-

* In sexto annorum milliario cujus nunc spatia superiora volvuntur, lib. xx. c. 7.

ance in the Christian Church. About the year 720, the Venerable Bede produced several tracts on chronology, in which he assigned, at considerable length, the reasons upon which he had decided in preferring the Hebrew Verity to the Greek translation. But the innovations of the Monk of Durham were extremely ill received by his contemporaries. He was denounced as a heretic, because he had taken upon himself to assert, in opposition to all the Fathers of the Church, that the incarnation of the Messiah did not take place in the sixth Millennium of the world.

The darkness of the succeeding ages prevents us from pursuing the progress of this opinion among the churchmen of the West. It is not improbable that the weight of Bede's name and erudition secured for him a number of followers, at a period when authority prevailed more than patient research in determining the judgment of the priesthood. Upon the revival of learning, the discussion was renewed with that vigour and freedom which characterized the second birth of intellect and of taste, and, accordingly, soon called into

the field of controversy the powerful talents of Scaliger, Petavius, Vossius, Pezron, and Usher.

It has not escaped observation, that the prejudices against the Roman Church which animated the disciples of Luther, were allowed to mix deeply with their investigations into this intricate subject. The Protestants, aware that the Papal Communion in those days followed the computation of the Septuagint, exerted all their learning in order to prove that the chronology of the Hebrew Bible possessed a higher authority than could be claimed for the most approved version of the Sacred Scriptures: And, overlooking the convincing evidence which is supplied by the writings of the ancient Jews, as well as of the Christian Fathers, during the four first centuries, they took part with the Talmudists and modern Rabbis against both the Eastern and the Western Church, and maintained that Jesus Christ appeared on earth at the end of the fourth millennial age.

Nothing, indeed, is more obvious to a person who studies with attention the works of the ancient chronologers, than that both Jews and

Christians, in the apostolic times, believed that nearly six thousand years had elapsed from the creation of the world ;—that a remarkable change was expected soon to take place in the natural and spiritual condition of mankind ;—and moreover, that all the systems of chronology, at that early period, bore a distinct and avowed reference to this general expectation. It is unquestionable, too, that the Christian writers without exception, during several hundred years, adhered to the ancient computation ; no difference of opinion on this subject having appeared amongst them, till they began to devote themselves to Jewish literature, and resigned their judgment to the mysteries and traditions of the Rabbinical school.

The main object of all the facts and reasonings which I have adduced in the preceding pages is to satisfy the reader,—*first*, that the original notion of a Millennium took its rise among the Jews or Pagans long prior to the Christian era ; and, *secondly*, that it was always accompanied with the persuasion that the world, in its present condition, was to continue only six thousand years,

or millennial ages ; the last of which was considerably advanced in the reign of Cæsar Augustus.

The expectation, that the Messiah promised to the fathers of the human race was to appear in the *latter days*, or towards the end of the world, in its present sinful condition, was, as we have seen, entertained both by Jews and by Christians ; the latter obviously adopting their opinions from the former, and applying to the spiritual dominion of the Saviour the notions of happiness and enjoyment which were suggested to the descendants of Abraham by the idea of a temporal sovereignty upon earth. Hence the origin of the *Christian Millennium*, which occupies so large a space in the history of the primitive Church, and in the hopes of the first converts to its holy faith. The sixth age, or millennary, had already passed the middle of its course. According to some authors, indeed, it was fast approaching to its termination. The six days of labour, pain, and transgression, were about to expire, when the promised Sabbath of rest and joy, to be spent on the renovated earth, was expected to compensate all the suffer-

ings which had been endured by the people of God, and to prove a time of refreshing sent forth from the presence of the Most High. It was for the reasons now stated, that the Jewish members of the Christian Church spoke of themselves as those upon whom the "ends of the world had come," and who were doomed to live in the "latter days." In their eyes the end of all things appeared to be at hand; the new heaven and the new earth were about to be revealed, and the dawn of the millennial day,—the thousand years of tranquillity and delight,—was expected forthwith to shine upon their heads.

Such expectations are fully intelligible, only when viewed through the medium of that chronology according to which the Christians of the Apostolic age,—who were for the most part Jews by extraction or principles,—were accustomed to measure the antiquity of their nation and of the human race. If, on the other hand, they be examined on the basis of the modern Hebrew text and the restricted computation of the Rabbis, they must appear not only absurd, but positively

without any foundation whatever, either in history or tradition. If the stream of time had only brought the world towards the close of the fourth Millennium, on what ground could a people, who had been taught to look for a great change in the condition of man and of the globe at the end of six thousand years, consider themselves as existing on the very eve of that change,—as living in the last days of the present mundane system,—and as destined to be witnesses and partakers of its final consummation?

But the reader may desire to have farther evidence than has yet been adduced in support of the assertion so often repeated, that the age of the world, at the birth of Christ, had extended towards the close of the sixth Millennium. It might be sufficient to state, that all Jewish authors, for three centuries before the Christian era, and all the Fathers of the Church as well as the Jews themselves, during the primitive times of the Gospel, concurred in this calculation. Eupolemus and Demetrius, who lived long prior to the reign of Augustus, and Josephus, who flourished in the

first age of our Faith, compiled histories of their countrymen from the annals contained in the Old Testament ; all of them proceeding on the ground of the ancient Hebrew chronology, which interposed between the creation of the world and the establishment of Imperial power at Rome about five thousand five hundred years.

In those days, the original Hebrew text and the Greek version by the Seventy agreed completely in point of dates ; in proof of which it will only be necessary to remind the learned reader that not only Josephus, but also some of the Christian Fathers, consulted both indiscriminately, for the purpose of comment and historical elucidation. It was not until the Jews discovered their mistake, in regard to the advent of their Messias, that they resolved to alter their chronology, and thereby to shorten the interval between the Creation and the Nativity of Jesus Christ. Their rejection of that Divine Personage rendered necessary an extensive change in their dates and calculations ; and, if we may credit the assertions of Justin Martyr and other primitive apologists for the Christian reli-

gion, we cannot doubt that their fraudulent purpose was realized to a considerable extent. Abulfaragius maintains, that “the Jews, believing it to have been foretold in the Law and the Prophets that Christ was to be sent in the *last times*, in order to produce a reason or excuse for not receiving him, altered the chronology of the world.” “The different epochs,” he observes, “being computed by the *generations* of the Patriarchs, or the ages at which their eldest sons were born, the Rabbis subtracted from Adam’s age, when he begat Seth, a hundred years, and added them to the remainder of his life ; and they did the same in the lives of most of his posterity down to Abraham. Thus it was made to appear by their new computation, that Christ was manifested in the very beginning of the fifth Millennium, near to the middle of the period to which the duration of the earth was to be limited ; being, according to their interpretations of Scripture, not more than seven thousand years in all. Therefore, said they, we are still in the middle of the time allotted to the world, and the epoch for the appearance

of the Messiah has not yet arrived." But the computation of the Septuagint, he concludes, "shows that Christ did actually come in the sixth millennial age of the world, the very time at which the predictions of the Old Testament led mankind to expect his advent."*

It must not be concealed, that the Christians participated in the disappointment of the Jews when the sixth millennial age came to an end

* Hist. Dyn. p. 72.—It may be interesting to some readers to have a brief outline placed before them of the results to which several chronologers have arrived, in regard to the length of time between the beginning of the world and the nativity of Christ :—

	Years.
Pezron makes that interval	5972
Clemens of Alexandria,	5624
Isaac Vossius,	5590
Septuagint Version, Abulfaragius,	5586
Josephus, according to Playfair,	5555
Theophilus of Antioch,	5515
Septuagint, Alexandria,	5508
Julius Africanus,	5500
Eusebius,	5200
Origen,	4830
Rabbi Jason Nosen,	3734
Rabbi Lipman,	3616

without the supernatural accompaniments which they had been led to expect, and that, for this reason, they likewise began to revise the calculations upon which their ancient chronology was founded. The earlier Fathers, as we have seen, were of opinion that six thousand years had nearly passed away at the epoch of Christianity ; whereas those who lived two or three centuries later, finding that the Millennium did not come within the period specified by the commentators, consented to subtract a portion from the original sum, and to date the birth of Christ somewhat earlier in the sixth Millennium. Clemens Alexandrinus reduced the interval between the creation and the nativity to 5624 years ; Julius Africanus to 5500 ; Eusebius to 5200 ; and Origen, according to some accounts, to 4830. At a subsequent period, however, all discussion and calculation respecting the Sabbath of a thousand years was abandoned. The more learned began to open their eyes to the fact that their predecessors had been misled by a Jewish fancy, and were satisfied that no good authority could be found in the Gospel

for believing that the duration of the world was limited to six thousand years, or that the seventh age, the prophetic Millennium, was to be distinguished by any particular manifestation of Divine power or of human felicity. The subject, generally speaking, lost all interest after the middle of the fifth century ; nor was it revived again till the dawn of the Reformation began once more to illumine the western parts of Europe, and to awaken new feelings among the speculative and the ambitious.

It is known to every one who has read with any degree of attention on this difficult subject, that the Millennarians in the ancient church were opposed by several writers, not on the ground of chronology, or on that of the questionable origin of the doctrine itself, but simply because their descriptions of the happiness to be enjoyed by the faithful savoured too much of earthly affections. Cerinthus, Papias, and others, were accused, and it would seem not altogether unjustly, of converting the reign of Christ with his chosen Saints into a scene of the most sensual voluptu-

ousness. Besides the freest use of marrying and giving in marriage, there was to be feasting on the most luxurious food, and also the still higher gratification of triumphing over their former enemies, now become their slaves and supplicants. The Elect were not only to drink new wine with the Messiah in his kingdom, but were also to receive a hundred-fold of lands and goods, and to enjoy the pleasure of seeing their children increase in an equal proportion. They expected, in short, a literal fulfilment of the ancient predictions, “ the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee; the sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee, and they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet : the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen and your vine-dressers ; you shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy

foundations with sapphires, and emeralds, and precious stones ; and I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncle, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. Jerusalem shall be built with sapphires, and emeralds, and precious stones ; thy walls, and towers, and battlements, with pure gold ; and the streets of Jerusalem shall be paved with beryl, carbuncle, and stones of Ophir."

In other respects there is a high tone of description and colouring, which certainly does not reflect much honour upon the spiritual-mindedness of the primitive Millennarians. The more pious of their number, indeed, were scandalized at the gross imaginations of the general body, who, while they sighed for the coming of Christ, had no other hope than that the gates of an earthly paradise would be thrown open, where the materials and inducements of sensual enjoyment would be increased beyond all calculation. Origen declared that the heathens themselves had more correct notions of spiritual bliss ; and expressed his apprehension, that if the doctrine of the Mil-

lennium should be made known to the unconverted, associated with images so little allied to holiness, the religion of Christ would sustain a serious injury.

Hence arose the school of the Allegorists, who undertook to explain the delights of the Millennium on a principle more consistent with spiritual purity. St Jerome states with sufficient clearness the grounds of the distinction between the two parties. “If,” says he, “we understand the Apocalypse literally, we must consent to *judaize*; if we interpret it metaphorically, and confine ourselves to the spiritual sense, we shall be chargeable with contradicting many of the ancients, particularly the Latin fathers, Tertullian, Victorinus, and Lactantius; and Irenæus, the bishop of Lyons, among the Greeks. This last was answered by Dionysius, the bishop of Alexandria, a man of uncommon eloquence, who wrote a curious tract, turning into ridicule the fable of a thousand years and the terrestrial Jerusalem adorned with gold and precious stones, the rebuilding of the temple, the sacrifices of sheep and oxen, the sabbatical rest, circumcision, marriage, births,

nursing of children, and the servitude of nations ; all which were to be succeeded by wars, the raising of armies, the celebration of triumphs, the slaughter of conquered enemies, and by the death of sinners a hundred years old. A reply, in two volumes, to this work was put forth by Apollinarius, an author whom not only the men of his own sect, but most of our people likewise, follow in this point ; so that it is no difficult matter to foresee what a multitude of persons I shall probably displease. These individuals, indeed, I do not greatly mind, since they are so much in love with the earth as to desire earthly things even in the kingdom of Christ.”*

Nepos, an Egyptian bishop, who lived early in the third century, had composed a book which he entitled “ A Refutation of the Allegorists,” the object of which, it is recorded, was to maintain the literal meaning of the prophecies respecting

* Quibus non invideo, si tantum ament terram ut in regno Christi terrena desiderent, et, post ciborum abundantiam gulæque ac ventris ingluviem, ea quæ sub ventre sunt, quærant.—*Præm. in Comment. in Esaiam*

the Millennium. It was to this work, and not to any particular tract by Irenæus, that Dionysius, the Alexandrian prelate mentioned by Jerome, wrote an answer. He assigns as his reason for opposing the opinions of a man, whom, in other respects, he greatly valued, that his treatise was extremely popular, and that even “some teachers extolled the doctrine contained in it as unfolding a deep and hidden mystery, while they suffer not the weaker of our brethren to conceive anything great and magnificent, either of the glorious and truly divine *appearance of our Saviour*, or of the resurrection of the dead, or of our *gathering together, and likeness to him*; but only to expect in the kingdom of God poor and mortal things, and such as we now enjoy in the present state.”*

So far, it must be acknowledged, there arose, in the beginning of the third century, an opposition to the Millennarians, directed against them, too, by orthodox members of the church. But

* Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. vii. c. 24.

let it be observed, at the same time, that this difference of opinion did not respect the doctrine of the Millennium itself,—the expectation of a thousand years of peace and joy at the end of the six millennial days of toil and pain. It was entirely confined to the gross notions borrowed from the Jews, and which had unquestionably prevailed to a great extent among the primitive believers, in regard to the *nature of the enjoyment* which awaited the subjects of the Messiah during his personal reign. One party explained the promises in a literal and rather carnal sense; the other maintained the necessity of expounding them on principles more closely allied to a spiritual dominion; but so far as we view the question in reference to the sure and certain hope entertained by the Christian world, that the Redeemer would appear on earth and exercise authority during a thousand years, there is good ground for the assertion of Mede, Dodwell, Burnet, and other writers on the same side, that, down to the beginning of the fourth century, the belief was universal and undisputed. On this point Whit-

by does not display his usual candour. In his attempt to prove that the early Christian Fathers were not unanimous in holding the doctrine of the Millennium, he represents the simple fact that Dionysius wrote against Nepos as an argument quite conclusive in his favour. Now Eusebius, our sole authority in this matter, informs us that the doctrine taught by the latter, and against which the Bishop of Alexandria composed his book, was, that “after the resurrection we should lead a life here on earth in *corporeal pleasures* the space of a thousand years.” We do not anywhere find that Dionysius called in question the general tenet as to the sabbatical rest which was entertained and propagated by the principal writers of his age. On the contrary, so far as we can learn from the brief notices of the Bishop of Cæsarea, he limited his opposition to the practice, countenanced by Nepos, of interpreting the Scriptures after the Jewish manner, and of giving to Christian hopes a savour of Judaism.*

* We are told by Lactantius himself, a decided Millennia-

From what has been stated, it must appear manifest that the early Fathers of the Christian Church believed in the doctrine of the Millennium ; that they connected the expectation of it with the expiry of six thousand years ; that they looked for the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ to reign with his chosen people in Jerusalem, surrounded with much power, magnificence, and enjoyment ; and that the hope of such a consummation did not cease to warm the hearts of the faithful until the period allotted for the

rian, that the Christians thought it expedient to conceal from their Pagan neighbours the precise ideas which they connected with the kingdom of the Messias, lest by their perverse interpretation they should twist things into a bad sense. “ Non defendere hanc (doctrinam) publicè atque asserere solemus, Deo jubente, ut quieti et silentes arcanum ejus in abdito, atque intra conscientiam nostram teneamus ; nec adversus istos verè profanos, qui non discendi, sed arguendi gratia, inclementer Deum ac religionem ejus impugnant, pertinaci contentione certemus. Abscondi enim tegique mysterium quam fidelissime oportet, maxime a nobis qui nomen fidei gerimus. Verùm illi hanc nostram taciturnitatem, velut malam conscientiam, criminantur. Unde etiam quasdam execrabiles opiniones de pudicis et innocentibus fingunt, et libenter his quæ finxerunt, credunt.”

duration of the world in its present form,—the six millennial ages,—had entirely passed away, when the seventh age, or great Sabbath, began, without producing the supernatural change with which it had been associated in the general faith. That a certain difference of opinion prevailed among ancient authors on this subject cannot be denied; but the unbiassed reader will probably find, as I have suggested in the preceding pages, that the only point of controversy in early times respected the specific nature of millennial felicity, and not, as has been insinuated, the authority of the doctrine itself.

It is worthy of remark, before we leave the history of this remarkable tenet, that as long as the prophecies respecting the Millennium were interpreted literally, the Apocalypse was received as an inspired production, and as the work of the Apostle John; but no sooner did theologians find themselves compelled to view its annunciations through the medium of allegory and of metaphorical description, than they ventured to call in question its heavenly origin, its genuineness,

and its authority. Dionysius, the great supporter of the allegorical school, gives a decided opinion against the authenticity of the Revelation. "Several of our predecessors," says he, "have wholly rejected this book, and by examining its contents, section after section, have found it obscure, void of reason, and its title forged. They said it was not John's, nay, that it was no revelation, being covered with so thick a veil of ignorance; and that none of the Saints, or the Apostles, or the godly men who belonged to the church, was the author of this book, but Cerinthus, the father of the noted heresy, who put out this treatise under the name of John, in order to gain credit and authority. The opinion of Cerinthus was, that the kingdom of Christ should be here on earth," &c.—"I deny not that the author's name was John, and I think, verily, the book was written by some pious man endowed with the Holy Ghost; but that it is the Apostle's, the son of Zebedee, the brother of James, who wrote the Gospel and the Catholic Epistle, I can hardly be brought to grant.—The Evangelist had both the

gift of utterance and the gift of knowledge. As for the other I will not gainsay but that he saw a revelation, and also that he received science and prophecy ; yet, for all that, I see his Greek not exactly uttered, the dialect and proper phrase not observed : I find him using barbarous expressions and solecisms which I do not think it necessary to repeat at present ; neither write I these things finding fault with ought—let no man accuse me thereof—but only I do weigh the diversity of both works.”*

Nor was Dionysius singular in his opinion relative to the authorship of the Apocalypse. The confidence of the early Christians in its inspiration was not a little impaired when they found that its splendid visions of triumph and delight were not realized, in the only sense in which they had been taught to understand them.

It is somewhat striking, too, that the primitive believers were impressed with the conviction that the threatenings of vengeance denounced in the

* Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. vii. c. 25.

Revelation applied to the Roman Empire ; for which reason, among others, that portion of Scripture was not for a long time freely exposed to the public eye, lest it should be thought to breathe an unfriendly spirit towards the government. Perhaps it was on a similar ground that the first Christians, according to Tertullian, prayed not only for the safety of the commonwealth and of the Emperor's person, but also that *the end of the world might be delayed* ; regarding, it is probable, the destruction of the Roman power and the arrival of the Millennium as events inseparably connected in the economy of Providence.* In this respect the Pope has only inherited the title which which was conferred by the ancient commentators upon the successors of Augustus ; the head of the Church having, since the Reformation, taken the place which formerly belonged to the head of the State, as the Apocalyptic " Man of Sin." At all events, the expiry of six thousand years, which, according to the lowest calculation prior to

* See Note B in Appendix.

the time of Eusebius, took place at the end of the fifth century, seems to have put a stop to all speculations on the Millennium. The original basis was removed ; and accordingly the whole fabric, erected on a Rabbinical fancy and supported by false views of Christian doctrine, sank tranquilly into the dust.*

II. Having followed the current of opinion respecting the Millennium as far as it seems necessary to pursue it, in the works of pagan authors as well as in the writings of the Christian Fathers, we shall proceed, in the second place, to describe the modifications which that opinion has undergone, the objects to which it points, and the reasoning by which it is supported in the present day.

No sooner had the revival of learning enabled men to peruse the Scriptures, than their attention was drawn to the remarkable characters and the

* For a summary of the reasons on which the ancient chronology is maintained in preference to that which has been introduced into the English Bible, see Note C in Appendix.

solemn predictions contained in the book of Revelation. At a somewhat later period when repeated discussion on the doctrines and usages of the Church had formed a strong party under the banner of intellectual freedom, the members of the old communion beheld in Luther the formidable Apostate whom the prophet of the Apocalypse foresaw usurping authority in the house of God ; while, on the other hand, the Reformers, with equal clearness of vision, identified the Roman Pontiff with the enemy of the Lamb and the destroyer of the Saints. Such recriminations naturally led to the study of the inspired volume, and gave an intense interest to the scenes of peace, prosperity, and triumph, which are there described as the inheritance of the faithful in the latter days. So early as the reign of Edward the Sixth, the mystical visions of the Millennium had once more awakened the ingenuity and inspired the hopes of theologians in reference to the earthly dominion of the Son of God. One of the Articles, accordingly, which were drawn up by the Bishops and other learned men in the Convocation held at

London in the year 1552, declares, that “ they who endeavour to revive the fable of the Millenarians are therein contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and cast themselves down headlong into Jewish dotages.”*

Notwithstanding the admonition conveyed in this authoritative guide to faith, to avoid *Jewish dotages*, learned men continued to calculate the times and seasons, with the view of ascertaining the precise epoch when the Lord Jesus should be revealed from heaven, as the King of Saints, and Ruler of the whole earth. Instead, however, of collecting the scattered fragments of opinion from the works of various authors, during the reigns of James and the first Charles, it will be more convenient to class the speculations of modern millennarians under two heads, according as they have supported the *literal* or the *metaphorical* interpretation of Scripture. To restrict the inquiry within still narrower limits, we shall consider the pious and

* Burnet's History of the Reformation, vol. ii. part ii. p. 306. Oxford edition of 1826. Note D, Appendix.

erudite Joseph Mede as representing the former denomination, and Dr Whitby as the champion of the latter ; it being perfectly manifest, that everything which has been written on the subject, since their times, may be referred with the utmost confidence to the authorities or reasonings which they employed in support of their respective systems.

Mr Mede and his followers assign as their principal reason for taking the literal sense of the prophecies, concerning the second advent of our Saviour and the thousand years of the heavenly reign, that the passages of Holy Writ in which they are conveyed will not admit of a figurative interpretation, without doing great violence to the natural meaning of words, and to the general belief of Christian antiquity. They maintain, not only that the companions and immediate successors of the Apostles held the doctrine of the Millennium and communicated it to the faithful in the purest era of the Church, but also, that the same tenet was confirmed by the authority of inspired men, and is to be found in our Sacred Books at the

present day. They remind us that St Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, makes a direct allusion to the coming of Christ and the first resurrection. “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent (go before) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God ; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air ; and so shall we be ever with the Lord.”*

St Paul, no doubt, takes pains, in a subsequent Epistle, to remove the apprehensions which the assurance just quoted seems to have created in their minds ; stating, that the coming of the Lord was to be preceded by a certain other event, which God, in his wise providence, still saw it right to defer. But it is plain, they allege,

* 1 Thessalonians, iv. 15, 16, 17.

that the obstacle alluded to by the Apostle was not one which could destroy their expectations of the speedy approach of the Messiah's reign upon earth, and the commencement of the millenary Sabbath which was closely associated with that event. On the contrary, he draws their attention to certain mysterious causes which, it is maintained, were already in operation, and about to produce the very crisis which was understood as being destined by Divine Wisdom to usher in the consummation of all things.

The expressions of the same inspired person, in the fifteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, from the twenty-third verse onwards, as well as the first three verses of the fifth chapter of the second Epistle, have also been understood as pointing to that terrestrial reign of the Messias, in the joys and triumphs of which the saints were to participate during a thousand years prior to the general resurrection. They that are Christ's were to rise at his coming,—the same idea that is stated in the address to the Thessalonians; after which the Redeemer was to exercise

authority until he had put all enemies under his feet, including Death, the last enemy that is to be destroyed. Our attention is called to the resemblance between these predictions and the following sublime picture, taken from the Apocalypse.

“And I saw the souls of them which were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he which hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”*

The Epistle to the Hebrews also contains, it has been thought, a manifest reference to the Rest or Sabbath which was believed to be in reserve for the people of God, founded upon the notice recorded by the sacred historian, that, after the six days of creation, the Almighty reposed from

* Revelation, xx. 4, &c.

his labour. We who believe, says the inspired penman, are about to enter into that tranquil and happy state which is one of the great objects of our faith. We are approaching to it (*εἰσερχομεθα*) ; and whoever is admitted to participate in the delights of that Sabbath, rests from his toils, as God did from his in the beginning of time. But faith is indispensable to this glorious consummation ; wherefore, let us hold fast the profession of our belief (for he is faithful who hath promised the reign of peace and joy) ; and let us be always in readiness, assembled together, and encouraging one another ; and this so much the more earnestly, as we see the day which is to crown all our expectations now rapidly approaching. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

In like manner, we are presented with quotations from the Epistle of St James, who exhorts his converts to be patient and firm, “for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh,”—“behold the Judge standeth before the door.” We are farther reminded of the declaration of St Peter, that

“ the end of all things is at hand.” The advice of St Paul to the Corinthians, moreover, is adduced to establish the same point, and to explain the reason why he dissuaded the Christian people of that age from entering into domestic engagements, or entangling themselves with the world.

“ This I say, brethren, the time is short ; it remains that both they that have wives be as though they had not, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as they that use it not, for the fashion of this world passeth away.”

Considerable stress is laid, too, on that passage in the third chapter of the Acts, where St Peter accounts for the cure of the lame man who had sat at the gate of the Temple. “ And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you ; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” The adjuration of St Paul to

Timothy has likewise been quoted for the same purpose. “ I give thee charge, in the presence of God who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who, before Pontius Pilate, witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Many other parts of Scripture have been advanced by the Literalists to justify their expectation of a personal advent of the Redeemer at the beginning of the Millennium. As to the precise nature of the dominion to be exercised by Jesus Christ, and of the happiness to be enjoyed by his elect, there is not, indeed, the same unanimity of sentiment. Mr Mede remarks, that “ the presence of Christ in this kingdom shall, no doubt, be glorious and evident ; yet I dare not so much as imagine (which some ancients seem to have thought) that it should be a *visible converse* upon earth. Yet may we grant that he shall appear, and be *visibly revealed* from heaven, especially for the calling and gathering of his ancient people, for whom, in the days of old, he did so

many wonders.”—“ The rising of the martyrs is that which is called the *first resurrection*, being, as it seems, a prerogative to their sufferings above the rest of the dead, who, as they suffered with Christ in the time of his patience, so should they be glorified with him in the reign of his victory, before the universal resurrection of all. Thus, I yet admit the *first* resurrection to be corporal, as well as the *second*, though I confess I have striven much against it; and, if the text would admit another sense more free of paradox, I had rather listen to it; but I find it not.”—“ The second resurrection, to be after the end of a thousand years, Justin Martyr, by way of distinction, calleth the *eternal and universal resurrection of all together*, namely, in respect of the former, which was particular, and but of some. And that it is common both to the godly and to the wicked, and not of the wicked only, may appear in that there are *two* books opened for the dead, whereof one is the book of life, which argues two sorts of dead to be judged. Nor can I imagine how it can be otherwise, unless all the just which live during

the thousand years be supposed to be immortal ; which is a paradox I dare not admit, understanding not that all the individuals, but that the body of the Church here on earth, should successively reign with Christ the Lord a thousand years."

The more modern writers, while they entertain the same views in regard to the Millennium, express themselves with greater confidence. " These judgments upon the Gentile nations and all the earth, he will finish by his own personal appearance in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and obey not the Gospel ; raising those who sleep in Jesus, and changing those of the Gentile Church who still abide in life ; and preserving the mourning Jewish Church, as Goshen was preserved in the plagues of Egypt : And when the promised land shall have been cleared of all intruders, and they themselves by suffering perfected for the habitation of it, he shall lead them into it with a mighty and outstretched arm ; and sit upon the throne of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness ; and send forth the law from Zion, and

the word of the Lord from Jerusalem ; and rule among the nations, and be the Prince of universal peace ; using, in this judgment and government of the earth, his risen saints, who will be his ministers, to execute whatever his pleasure is. And thus Satan, being cast out, and the Prince of Light, and the Heavenly Jerusalem, the dwelling-place of his elect Church, being present, the *Jerusalem on earth*, with the house of Jacob and all the nations, shall enjoy that fulness of peace and joy, that millennial reign of righteousness, for which we all hope, and pray, and diligently labour. This *material* city, I say, in which the saints shall dwell, and from which they shall go forth on their errands, terrestrial or celestial, shall bring to the matter of the earth that same assurance of an unchangeable beauty yet to be, as the pure body of Christ, that rose to the eternal throne, doth bring at this moment to my body, and to the body of the Church now living, or mouldering in the grave. At the coming of the Lord there will be such a purification of the earth by fire, and amelioration of its condition by other means,

known, perhaps, to God only, as shall realize the blessedness of that Millennial kingdom, whereof some part of the delineation is set down above. We interpret the conflagration of the earth to be its purification or baptism with fire, and not its annihilation. We believe that our Lord shall reign a certain limited time with his enemies under his feet, that is, in a state of subjection ; and afterwards, that he shall reign for ever with his enemies under the dominion of the second death : that there will be a period of Satan's imprisonment, and of Death's subjugation, and of the earth's protection, government, and blessedness, in despite of all the powers of darkness ; and that after this there will be an eternity of Satan's second death, and Death's second death, and the second death of all wicked men and wicked angels, and their fruits of wickedness ; which shall be to the earth an eternity of infallible blessedness, of God's immediate presence, of the concentration of his love, of the *peculiar abode and government* of his Son. And that this immortal earth for ever, and the redeemed saints inheriting for ever their inhe-

ritance that fadeth not away, and the Son of God their king, united to human nature for ever, shall be for ever the monument of God's love and mercy to believing sinners.—But if these theorists destroy the earth, or make of it their hell, for neither of which ideas can I find a single passage in Scripture, and against them a thousand ; if they carry off the race of the redeemed men to mingle with, and be lost among the countless myriads of the unfallen angels, the whole end of redemption is lost. And the manhood of Christ is lost. He is not God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever. And our honour to have all put under our feet is lost ; and the crowning truth of the whole mystery is lost, which is that God's power and love is able from the dust of the ground to create a substance worthy of being incorporated with his own eternal essence, and that of the children of sin and frailty his redeeming Word and regenerating Spirit can make the kings and the priests of the universe. For I have no idea that, after the purification and exaltation of this earth, those who passed through Christ's trials and at-

tained unto his glory, shall dwell above in isolated blessedness, or be seen from afar like a solitary star in the spangled heavens; but do conceive that we shall be as it were the heralds of faithfulness, carrying in our persons both the lesson and the example wherever we go; ministering to all his creatures the profound mysteries of God's love to his faithful children, judging angels, ruling principalities and powers, and having all things under our feet, partakers of the prophetic, priestly, and kingly throne of Christ. This I conceive to be the mystery of the God-man, which is not a phenomenon or appearance made to the earth only, but is a reality, a substantial union of the two natures which cannot be hidden, but must be known to all creatures in and under heaven. And if this be the orthodox doctrine of Christ's humanity, who can doubt that, under Christ, creatures of the same glorified humanity may be stewards of that universal kingdom, and that the Saints shall reign upon the earth where Christ for ever reigneth, and from that, as the court and centre of their government, exercise

under their king universal government to the end of the world.—Why may it not be that the Son may administer the kingdom of all the universe, by that race of kings and priests whom he hath brought through the same tribulations through which he passed himself? If angels be my ministers in this my humiliation, what in my exaltation may I not hope to become? *The Lord knows I am not ambitious of these dignities,* and that I write not these things in any ambitious mood. But to justify his power and his grace which hath already made me, a worm, to become a spiritual member of his eternal Son.”*

Another Millennarian informs us that their scheme implies “a literal, not a figurative coming, a personal, not an energetical manifestation of the great God and our Saviour, in his day. We believe that he shall come as he hath never yet come, in a form of glory, the form of adorned manhood, so as to be seen and owned of man.

* Preliminary Discourse to the Translation of Ben-Ezra.
By the Rev. E. Irving.

Yet such seeing shall be transient to man in the flesh, abiding only to man in the spirit.—Such his coming shall be at the commencement, not the close, of his earthly reign ; that new era of peace and righteousness which most Christians profess to be looking for. Yet he shall come while nations are dwelling upon the earth in their ancient form, and shall continue to maintain their existence in that form during a limited period.—His raising of the blessed dead and his changing the bodies of the blessed living shall be simultaneous with the annunciation of his approach, and, together with the vengeance then executed upon the unbelieving members of his visible church, shall constitute a distinct integral part of his work of judging the world. Yet shall there be unraised and unjudged ones still ; yet shall the earth have a judgment still to undergo ; yet shall there be temples and services, and an epoch to be waited for.—The restoration of the Jewish nation, *as a whole*, shall be subsequent to, and shall be effected in quick succession to, the blessings and cursings of the instant of his coming. Yet shall

that nation have received a *partial restoration* before, and individuals of the ‘glorified fulness’ shall have been taken out of it; yet shall the joys of Canaan and of the Jew be distinct from that of the spiritual Israel.—Christ’s spiritual empire shall be coextensive with the earth, with the world; yet its seat shall not be earth, though communicating with it; his Saints shall *reign* as well as serve with him, but they shall not jostle with the men of the flesh, and, though intermixing when need be, *individually*, shall be visible only by special appointment and operation.—A second apostacy, a second conflict, a second resurrection, a second judgment, shall follow close upon the sunset of the millennial day; yet even these events shall not finish the transactions of earth, which shall survive her conflagration as she has survived her deluge.”*

Without the aid of additional quotations from other writers on the same side, the reader cannot fail to perceive that the Millennarians of the pre-

* Vaughan’s Sermon on the Church’s Expectation.

sent day expect, as their predecessors expected seventeen hundred years ago, that the Redeemer will descend in a bodily form to this world, raise the good to life, and reign with them in majesty and glory a thousand years,—that, during this long period, peace, happiness, and purity, will everywhere prevail,—that when it shall have expired, he will call from their graves the rest of the dead, whom he will judge according to their works,—and, finally, that he will either remove his Elect to heaven, or dwell with them for ever upon earth, renewed and adorned as a fit residence for just men made perfect, and as a “court and centre of government” for their celestial King.

The doctrine of the Allegorists, on the other hand, rests entirely upon a figurative exposition of scriptural language. The *coming of Christ* means, according to them, the death of the believer; the *presence* of the Redeemer with his Church, as her Lord and protector, is explained so as to denote his spiritual agency and providential care; the *raising of the martyrs* from their graves conveys nothing more than the assurance

that men of a similar spirit will arise in the latter days ; and the *reigning of the Saints* on earth is only a prophetic mode of expressing the fact, that their faith and hopes will be inherited by remote generations. The *world to come*, interpreted on a similar principle, means Heaven ; while the state of blessedness and glory prepared for the righteous is shadowed forth by the phrase of “ a new heaven and a new earth.”

The position which the controversy now occupies bears some resemblance to the ground of dispute in the days of Nepos and Dionysius. There is this difference, however, that both parties in the primitive Church seem to have admitted the proper doctrine of the Millennium,—a thousand years of tranquil delight, after the six thousand years of contention and sorrow,—and to have disagreed only as to the nature of the enjoyment reserved for the chosen people of God. At present, the Literalists do not pretend to regard the Millennium in the light in which it was viewed by the ancients, namely, as the Sabbath which is to succeed the six days of labour ; and pay, in fact, no

respect whatever to the chronological question that determines the age of the world as the abode of man : while the Allegorists, on the other hand, equally inattentive to the original notion of the Millennium and to the dates which regulated the expectation of the primitive believers, profess not to see in the splendid visions of the Apocalypse anything more definite than the conversion of the Jews, at some future period, to the faith of Christ, the prosperity of the Church, and the prevalence of good principles among a large portion of the human race. In our days, too, as in the days of the Alexandrian bishop, the advocates of the metaphorical scheme derive great advantage to their argument from the absurd opinions mixed up by their adversaries with their favourite tenet of an approaching Millennium ; and hence the great body of Christians are willing to receive any exposition of an obscure text that will protect the Inspired Volume from the scandal, and the public mind from the apprehensions, which are found inseparable from the direct method of interpretation.

It is for the reason now stated, that modern divines have concurred in the use of certain professional terms, which undoubtedly owe their reception to a feeling of convenience rather than to the authority of sound criticism. For example, the phrase "coming of Christ," which, in former times, conveyed the most exalted ideas in regard to the destiny of the world, is, as I have already noticed, conventionally employed, in our days, to mean the hour of every individual's death. The "first resurrection," again, according to Whitby and his followers, implies nothing more solemn than the conversion of the Jews; the reign of the saints with the Redeemer a thousand years on earth, denotes simply the revival of evangelical doctrine; and by the "rest of the dead, who lived not again till after the thousand years were finished," we are to understand a generation of bad men, who are to be born about the end of the Millennium, and to annoy the congregations of the faithful. Those very persons, who were not to have fathers or mothers for nine hundred years afterwards, are, agreeably to this hypothesis, described

as the *rest of the dead*, at the moment the martyrs were raised to live and reign with Jesus ! When St Paul told Timothy to observe the instructions delivered to him, “ until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,” he meant nothing more, say they, than that his disciple should attend to them all the days of his life. When the same Apostle dissuaded the Corinthians from carrying their suits before a Pagan magistrate, on the ground that the “ saints were destined to judge or govern the world,” he must be understood as intimating, not that the kingdom of Christ was about to appear when all things would be put under their feet, but only that, at some distant period, the principles of the Gospel would modify the legislation of every land under the sun.

In short, the main object of the Allegorical school is to explain away the proper Millennium, by endeavouring to prove that the language of the New Testament has no reference to any personal advent of the Redeemer prior to the general judgment, nor to any kingdom except that which is in heaven. That their aim is

good and justifiable, I should be very slow to call in question, inasmuch as it is high time to relinquish the hopes of such a Millennium as was expected by the Jews and early Christians ; but that the means which they have adopted to accomplish their end will prove effectual, is a position which no one will maintain who compares the language of primitive times with the glosses which they have been pleased to put upon it. Every person who reads the book of Revelation without any bias on his mind, and then turns to the far-fetched commentaries of Dr Whitby and his pupils, will perceive, either that undue liberties have been used by them in expounding the original text, or that John the Divine did not know the meaning of his own words. Hence the facility and the earnestness with which the prophecy, in its literal sense, has been at all times received by the serious part of the Christian world ; and hence, too, the want of confidence in the ingenious but subtle and unsatisfactory expositions, by means of which it has been attempted, from time to time,

to obviate this natural impression, and to substitute more reasonable views in regard to the plans of Providence.

Instead of persevering in this unequal war, in which the Literalists will always have the advantage, it were better to declare at once that the doctrine of the Millennium at no time rested on an authority, or possessed a sanction, to which a Christian divine is bound to pay the smallest respect. It originated among the Jews at a period when the loss of power and subjection to a barbarous enemy created in their hearts a strong desire for temporal greatness ; it was connected with a system of dates which brought the history of the world down to a certain epoch at which they were led to expect a special interposition of Providence in behalf of their scattered tribes ; and it conveyed to the imagination of every Israelite the pleasing picture of peace and abundance, to be enjoyed during a long series of years under the Messias, their prophetic king, who, they believed, would extend his dominion to the remot-

est parts of the earth. The conversion of numbers among that people to Christianity did not alter their views in reference to the Millennium. It became an article in their creed, that Jesus of Nazareth was in truth the Deliverer promised to their fathers, and that, although he had suffered death at the hands of the Romans and had left the world for a time, he would certainly return at the end of the sixth age ; when he would establish at Jerusalem a glorious kingdom, subdue all the enemies of Jacob, and place the government of the renovated globe in the hands of his Elect.

In a word, they ingrafted upon the new Faith the notions which they had acquired in the schools of the Rabbis ; and three centuries at least passed away before it was discovered that the Redeemer of the Christians was not, in all respects, the Messiah of the Jews. It is worthy of particular notice, too, that, in proportion as the latter people became convinced of the truth just stated, they gave way more and more to their hostile feelings against the followers of Jesus ; altered their system of chronology ; and even, it is al-

leged, attempted to corrupt still farther such parts of the Old Testament as might seem to confirm the conclusions of their antagonists.

May we not, then, at this stage of the inquiry, fearlessly ask ourselves what connexion the doctrine of the Millennium has with the Christian religion? We have seen its origin, so far as it can be traced, in times long prior to the birth of our Saviour; we have examined its history in the ages subsequent to that event: and, in the one case, we can discover no ground on which a believer in the Gospel can be invited to repose his confidence; while, in the other, it presents itself only as a pious fancy of which men became gradually ashamed, and which at length they permitted, as with one consent, to fall into oblivion.

I am well aware that the link which has hitherto connected the doctrine of the Millennium with some portion of the Christian faith, is the important consideration that this tenet was held not only by the Fathers of the Church in the earliest and purest times, but also by the author of the Apocalypse, who is usually reputed to have

been one of the twelve Apostles. The rejection of the Millennium, therefore, comes very naturally to be regarded as equivalent to an attack on the infallibility of inspired men,—an inference which acquires additional weight from the fact well known to every theological student, that some of the ablest commentators have included St Paul and St Peter among those ancient writers who thought it not improbable that the end of the world would take place in their own times. To imagine that two Apostles could be mistaken in a matter of such awful import would, it is insinuated, tend to weaken our confidence in their authority at large, and to cast a shade of doubt over their doctrines in regard to things of still higher moment.*

* Grotius, in his Commentary on the words *οτι ημεις οι ζωντες* (1 Thessalonians iv. 15,) remarks,—“Omnino putavit Paulus fieri posse ut ipse viverit judicii generalis tempore; idque non ex his tantum verbis satis apertis liquet, sed et ex 1 Cor. xv. 31, 52, 53, et 2 Cor. v. 1, 2, 3.—*Κοινωνις* hic locum habere non potest. Ea enim usum habet ubi aliena vitia nobis aut nostras virtutes aliis, per modestiam, communicamus. Hic de eventis agitur.”

It must for ever remain extremely difficult to determine what were the precise ideas which the

A similar opinion was entertained by the celebrated Whiston, who urged in support of it the same passages of Scripture which are quoted or referred to by Grotius. Hugo Menardus comes to the same conclusion in his Notes on the Epistle of St Barnabas.—“Multorum fuit opinio tantum sex millia annorum curriculo sæculum hoc circumscribi, quo evoluto finem mundi adventurum, juxta numerum dierum quo Deus hunc mundum fabricatus est. *Haec doctrina videtur esse Sancti Pauli; Epist. ad Hebræos, cap. 4.*”—*Patres Apostolici*, vol. i, p. 45. *edition of Cotelarius and Joannes Clericus. Amsterdam, 1726.*

The very learned Bishop of Lincoln observes, that, “In the early ages of the Church, a notion was very generally prevalent among its members, that the end of the world was at hand; and sceptical writers have insinuated that the Apostles themselves were not entirely exempt from this erroneous persuasion. That the notion took its rise from expressions in the Apostolical Writings may be admitted; but that it existed in the minds of the writers themselves is far from certain; since the passages may very reasonably be supposed to refer to the capture of Jerusalem by the Romans, and the total subversion of the Jewish polity.” *Eccles. Hist. of the Second and Third Centuries, &c.* by John, Bishop of Bristol (now Lincoln,) 1826.

That the notion just stated has been abused by sceptical writers for very bad purposes is well known to every one who is in the smallest degree acquainted with the history of opinion in modern times; but it is no less certain that it has been held by men who possessed very correct views of inspiration, as well as of the great objects of the Apostolical office in all its parts.

Apostles meant to express when they used the language which the primitive believers interpreted so as to support their favourite doctrine of a Millennium. But let it be admitted that the inspired servants of Christ shared in the impression which was almost universal among their countrymen, relative to the end of the world and the earthly reign of the Messias ; does it necessarily follow that our faith in the things which they were specially commissioned to teach must be overthrown, merely because there may be reason to suspect that, in regard to a subject on which they were purposely kept ignorant, they continued to think with the rest of the world ? We know that St Peter was several years an Apostle before he was enlightened as to one of the most essential and characteristic purposes of Christianity, namely, that the Gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, and that the former as well as the latter were to be blessed with all its privileges. Nay, the Apostles and brethren who were at Jerusalem when they heard of the transaction at Cæsarea were disposed to “ contend with Peter,”

and to question the regularity of his conduct in admitting heathens into the Church of Christ ; nor was it until they had listened to the details of the miracle by means of which the authority to baptize a pagan family had been conveyed to him, that their eyes were opened so as to understand the fundamental principle of their own religion. “ Then,” they exclaimed, like men who just obtained a new light, “ Then hath God to the Gentiles also granted repentance unto life !”

That the Apostles, after the supernatural scene of Pentecost, should have continued for years to entertain the Jewish notion that the favour of God in this world and the next was restricted to the natural descendants of Abraham, is a fact certainly not less surprising than that they should have clung to the expectation of the Millennium during their whole lives. In regard to the latter point, indeed, there is no just ground for astonishment at the ignorance of the disciples, because it was on that very head that our Lord refused to them the information which their curiosity, on more than one occasion, sought to extort

from him. He distinctly declared that the limits of his commission, as the Son of Man, did not admit of any revelation as to the period fixed in the counsels of Eternity for the duration of the present state of things. He gave an assurance, indeed, that the Holy Spirit would bring all things to their remembrance *whatsoever he had taught them*, and more especially whatever they had seen or heard in relation to those great facts and doctrines on which the foundations of Christianity were laid. But, in reference to future events, we perceive no evidence to justify the opinion that these chosen servants of the Redeemer enjoyed views in any degree more vivid or extensive than such as might have arisen from their natural penetration, aided by a careful inquiry into the writings of the Old Testament.

Now, as our Saviour had taught the Apostles nothing respecting the duration or end of the world, the miraculous gifts bestowed upon them on the day of Pentecost neither added to their knowledge nor removed their former impressions on that interesting subject. We ought therefore

to regard their allusions to chronology and to other matters of human science, in the same light in which we view their opinions respecting the constitution of the universe and the structure of the heavenly bodies. In the language of their forefathers, in still more ancient times, they continued to speak of the firmament as a plane surface, as a canopy which might be drawn aside like a scroll, and as a covering which might be rolled up like a garment. They were entire strangers to that sublime study which has carried the works of God and the conceptions of man to an extent which borders on infinity. They knew not that the smallest of those objects which twinkle in the evening sky possess a magnitude greater than the earth, and are so distant, that an arrow from the bow could not reach them in ten thousand years. But notwithstanding this ignorance, which they shared with the men of their age, their doctrines on the still more important subject of human redemption were full of knowledge and truth; because, in all that they taught on this head, they were guided by Divine

inspiration, and spoke and wrote like the oracles of God. I would therefore conclude that, although it were necessary to make a concession as to the private opinions of the Apostles in respect to the Millennium, the principles of our faith would not be thereby shaken ; because the promise of our Lord did not extend to the communication of all knowledge, but merely to the recollection and understanding of all the truth which they had heard from his own lips, and to the fuller expansion of the same Divine institutes in proportion as they should, at a future period, be able to comprehend them.

It may nevertheless appear in the eyes of some as a formidable objection to the views now stated, that they seem to acknowledge in the writings of the Apostles a mixture of human opinion with the inspired doctrine of the Gospel. In reply to this, it will surely be admitted that, in matters which respected his personal concerns, and even his services in the Gospel, St Paul, when he had no special revelation communicated to him, wrote from those impressions of probability, and even of

inclination, which, in ordinary circumstances, lead the mind to anticipate the scene towards which the course of events, or the calls of duty, are the most likely to guide its exertions; and we know that, on several occasions, such as his intended visit to Ephesus, his prospects on this head were not realized. Nor has it ever been denied, that all the Apostles were accustomed to mix with the doctrines of the Gospel opinions, and illustrations at least, which they had derived from merely human learning, or from local tradition. Hence, every interpreter of Scripture thinks himself warranted in making a distinction between the articles of faith which were delivered by St Peter or St Paul, and the accompaniments, so to call them, of historical allusion and Rabbinical commentary, by means of which these tenets may occasionally appear to have been recommended to the particular notions and modes of thinking which prevailed among the Jews.

But, whatever may be thought in regard to the personal feelings of the Apostles, there is no doubt that, in the age immediately after them, their lan-

guage was expounded so as to give countenance to the prevailing belief, that the end of the world was fast approaching, and that a new order of things was about to commence under the immediate government of the Messiah. “In six thousand years,” says St Barnabas, the Apostle and companion of St Paul, in a passage already quoted, “the Lord God will bring all things to an end : And when his Son shall come, and abolish the season of the Wicked One, and judge the ungodly, and shall change the sun, the moon, and the stars, then shall he rest gloriously on that seventh day ; for with him one day is a thousand years.”*

It is manifest, at all events, that those who continue to cherish the expectation of a Millennium,

* “Of all the prophets St John is the only one who hath declared particularly, and in express terms, that the martyrs shall rise to partake of the felicities of this kingdom, and that it shall continue upon earth a thousand years ; and the Jewish Church before him and the Christian Church after him have farther believed and taught that these thousand years will be the seventh millenary of the world.”—*Bishop Newton on the Prophecies*, vol. iii. p. 200.

must consent to relinquish the two great doctrines with which it was connected in ancient times ; namely, that it should stand in the same relation to the age of the world that the Sabbath does to the six days of the week ; and that its affairs were to be directed by the personal administration of the Lord Jesus Christ, in virtue of his office as the King of Saints. The former must be given up, because the seventh Millennium expired more than two hundred years ago ; and the relinquishment of the latter follows as a matter of course, because the second advent was uniformly associated in the minds of the primitive Christians with the termination of six thousand years. But, if the two points now mentioned be abandoned, nothing will remain of the millennial hypothesis on which the Church of Christ in these days ought to repose any hope of a literal and visible reign of the Redeemer among men, during the long period of ten centuries. The foundation is removed, and the structure must fall ; and we shall therefore, it may be presumed, see the propriety of assenting to the views of those learned men, who, at the era of

the Reformation, ranked the Millennium among “Jewish dotages,”—as one of those hereditary impressions which clung to the house of Israel, even after they became Christians, and which, like their refusal of salvation to the Gentiles, gradually gave way to the power of advancing knowledge, and to their clearer perception of the Divine purposes in the great scheme of human redemption.

We have other and much more satisfactory grounds on which to build an expectation that the progress of true religion, peace, and benevolence, will shed a blessing upon mankind in future ages ; that the knowledge of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea ; and that all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of Christ. This pleasant prospect is not at all dependent upon the belief of the Millennium, and ought not, therefore, to be restricted in its beginning, its duration, or its end, by any reference to that ancient theory of Rabbinical chronology. We are not even called upon, as Christian expositors, to allegorize the incidents of that superna-

tural reign, or to seek in its mystical events the history of our more spiritual Faith. The Jews and their followers in the primitive times understood the Millennium literally ; the word had no double sense in their creed ; it was not, in their estimation, the emblem or shadow of better things to come ; on the contrary, it denoted the actual visible appearance of the Messiah, and the establishment of his kingdom upon earth, as the Sovereign of the elect people of God. Hence we might with equal wisdom attempt to find a hidden evangelical meaning in any other opinion which prevailed among the Scribes and Doctors in Judea, relative to the works or providence of the Almighty ; and conclude, at once, that every dogma held by the descendants of Abraham, respecting themselves and the nations by which they were surrounded, involved a Christian doctrine worthy of being exalted to an article of faith in these latter days. Those authors who shall succeed in satisfying the readers of primitive Church History that the Millennium was understood as an allegorical representation of spiritual delights and

theological triumph, need not despair of reducing to a figure of speech the most striking events recorded in the pages of the Old Testament.*

* “ With what propriety can it be said that some of the dead who were beheaded ‘ lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years, but the rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished,’ unless the *dying* and *living again* be the same in both places, a proper death and resurrection? Indeed the *death* and *resurrection* of the witnesses before mentioned (chap. xi.) appears from the concurrent circumstances of the vision to be figurative; but the *death* and *resurrection* here mentioned must, for the very same reasons, be concluded to be real. If the martyrs rise only in a spiritual sense, then the ‘ rest of the dead’ rise only in a spiritual sense; but if the rest of the dead really rise, the martyrs rise in the same manner. There is no difference between them; and we should be cautious and tender of making the first resurrection an allegory, lest others should reduce the second into an allegory also, like those whom St Paul mentions, 2 Timothy ii. 17, 18, Hymeneus and Philetus, who, concerning the truth, have erred in saying the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some. It is to this first resurrection that St Paul alludes when he affirms, 1 Thes. iv. 16, that ‘ the dead in Christ shall rise first,’ and 1 Corinth. xv. 23, that ‘ every man shall be made alive in his own order, Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming, and then cometh the end’ after the general resurrection.”—*Bishop Newton on the Prophecies*, vol. iii. p. 198.

III. This remark naturally leads me to the last topic of this discourse, which is, as has been stated, to take a brief review of the practical tendency of the doctrine in question as illustrated by the history of the Church in different ages, and more especially in our own country in times comparatively recent.

Every one is ready to condemn the rule by which the truth or value of a principle is determined from a reference to its effect on the minds of those who hold it. But it will be admitted, at the same time, that, if any particular tenet has in all ages been accompanied with absurdities, flowing from it as an effect from its cause, it may be both perfectly reasonable and candid to suspect the soundness of the views on which it is supported. The doctrine of the Millennium, from the days of Papias and Cerinthus down to the present moment, has laboured under the opprobrium of leading the Christian world from sober notions of the kingly government of the Redeemer to the most extravagant opinions in regard to the terrestrial dominion of the Messiah,

and from the hope of spiritual enjoyment in heaven to the expectation of corporeal delight upon earth.

In this respect the ancients were more reprehensible than those who, in modern times, have inherited their faith. Irenæus, for example, informs us, that “some Elders who had seen John, the disciple of the Lord, relate, that they had heard from him that our Lord, speaking of these times—the times of the Millennium—said, the days shall come in which a single grain of wheat shall produce ten thousand ears, and each ear shall yield ten thousand grains, and each grain shall yield ten pounds of pure white flour; and the other fruits, seeds, and plants, shall possess a corresponding productiveness.”—“The days shall come,” says the same Father, “in which vines shall grow, each having ten thousand branches, and each of these branches shall have ten thousand smaller branches, and each of these branches shall have ten thousand twigs, and each of these twigs shall have ten thousand clusters of grapes, and each of these grapes being pressed,

shall give twenty-five measures of wine. And when any of the Saints shall take hold of one of these clusters, another will cry out, *I am a better cluster, take me, and by me bless the Lord.*"

In a similar spirit Lactantius expounds the predictions respecting the Millennium. "Those who at that time are living in the body shall not die; but during these thousand years shall produce an infinite number of children, and their offspring shall be holy and beloved of God. But those who shall be raised from the dead will, as judges, rule over the living. The nations, however, shall not be altogether destroyed; some of them shall be left for a conquest to God; that the just may triumph over them and subject them to perpetual bondage.—After Christ's advent the righteous shall be gathered together from the whole earth; and the judgment being finished, the holy city shall be built in the midst of the earth; in which its builder, God himself, shall dwell along with the reigning Saints.—Then that darkness with which the heaven is overspread

and obscured shall be removed. The moon will acquire the brightness of the sun and wane no more. The sun will become sevenfold brighter than he is at present. The earth will disclose her fertility and spontaneously produce fruits in the greatest abundance. The rocks will drop honey ; wine will run in streams, and the rivers overflow with milk. In short, the world itself will be glad ; and all nature, rescued and delivered from the dominion of evil, will rejoice."

After these happy days comes the vengeance which the Omnipotent is to pour out upon the wicked, the description of which has something in it approaching to the sublime. " First, he will most powerfully shake the earth, by which commotion the mountains of Syria will be cloven asunder. The hills shall sink. The walls of the cities shall tumble down. During three days God will restrain the sun from setting. He will set it on fire ; and a scorching heat and a mighty burning, with showers of sulphur, hailstones, and sparks of fire, shall descend on his enemies, the wicked. Their spirits shall be melted with heat

and their bodies bruised with hail. They shall wound each other with swords ; and the mountains shall be filled with their bodies and the valleys covered with their bones. But during these three days the people of God shall be hidden in the caves of the earth till the wrath of God against the nations shall close the last judgment. Then the righteous shall come forth from their concealment, and find all things covered with carcasses and bones. But the whole race of the wicked shall totally perish ; and there shall no more be any nation in the world except the single nation of God. Then for seven whole years the forests shall remain untouched, and no wood shall be cut down from the mountains. But the weapons of the nations shall be used for fuel ; and then there shall be no more war, but everlasting peace and rest. —When the thousand years shall be finished, the world shall be renewed by God, the heavens shall be folded up and the earth changed. And God shall transform men into the likeness of angels, and they shall be as white as snow, and live continually in the presence of the Almighty, and

sacrifice to their Lord, and serve him for ever. At the same time shall be the second and public resurrection of all, in which the wicked shall be raised to everlasting pain.”*

But, besides this infection on the minds of those, who, to use Dr Whitby's phrase, were disposed to “feast and junket it,” there was another malady, which directed its attacks upon the imagination. Tertullian, in his third book against Marcion, gravely relates, that, in the land of Judea, *a city was seen suspended in the air forty successive days, during the early part of the morning*. This city, according to him, was the image of the New Jerusalem, destined for the reception of the Saints during their reign of a thousand years on earth; in the course of which, their resurrection, it was believed, would be gradually effected, according to their different degrees of merit, and which was to be followed by the con-

* See Irenaei Opera, lib. v. c. 33. Lactantii Opera, lib. vii. c. 24—26. Whitby's Treatise of the Millennium, chap. i. Hamilton's Defence of the Scriptural Doctrine concerning the Second Advent of Christ, p. 295, &c.

flagration of the world and the general judgment.*

In the writings of other ancient divines there are similar fancies applicable to the New Jerusalem, which it is not necessary to describe at greater length. It is of more importance to remark, that, when the subject was revived in times nearer to the present, equal freedoms were used with common sense, and with the language of Scripture,

* “ Constat enim, Ethnicis quoque testibus, in Judæa per dies quadraginta, matutinis momentis, civitatem de cœlo pendisse, omni mœniorum habitu, evanescentem de profectu diei, et alias de proximo nullam. Hanc dicimus excipiendis resurrectione Sanctis et refovendis omnium bonorum utique spiritualium copiâ, in compensationem eorum quæ in seculo vel despeximus vel amisimus, a Deo prospectam. Siquidem et justum et Deo dignum illic quoque exsultare famulos ejus, ubi sunt et afflicti in nomine ipsius. Hæc ratio regni terreni : post cujus mille annos, intra quam aetatem concluditur Sanctorum resurrectio pro meritis vel maturius vel tardius resurgentium, tunc et mundi destructione et judicii conflagratione commissa, demutati in atomo in angelicam substantiam, scilicet per illud incorruptelæ superindumentum, transferemur in cœleste regnum.”—*Tertul. Advers. Marcionem. lib. iii. c. 24.* See also *Eccles. Hist. of Second and Third Centuries, by the Bishop of Bristol, page 367.*

by the new school of Millennarians. No one can speak of Joseph Mede but with respect, and even with a feeling of reverence ; and yet, in order to maintain his hypothesis, he is compelled to have recourse to such expedients as must excite a smile in the gravest countenance. For instance, as he believed that there will be a conflagration at the beginning of the Millennium, from which are to arise the new heaven and the new earth, he found himself at a loss how to preserve the righteous alive during a visitation so tremendous. He endeavours, therefore, to get rid of this difficulty by suggesting that the purification by fire will be only partial, and not extended over the whole surface of the globe. The continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa, will, he admits, be subjected to its influence ; and, when renovated thereby, will constitute what St John calls the *Parembolè*, or camp of the Saints, whether raised from the dead, or corporeally changed in the day of the Lord's coming. At the same time, he thinks it not improbable that the righteous will be caught up into the air, and borne on high, as it were on eagles'

wings, until the day of vengeance shall be past, and the wicked entirely destroyed.

It is sufficient to observe, that the former of these suppositions is altogether gratuitous, and even inconsistent with the description of St Peter, who assures us that the earth and all the works that are in it shall be burned up. The second conjecture rests entirely on the authority of the Rabbinical commentators, who have, in this instance, given to a passage in the Psalms a meaning which neither the spirit nor object of the composition seems to warrant.

It is somewhat amusing to discover that America, which, according to Mr Mede, is to have no part in the Christian Millennium, is selected by President Edwards as the favoured spot where that Sabbath of peace and delight will first send forth its dawning rays. “There are many things,” says he, “that make it probable that this work will begin in America. It is signified that it shall begin in some very remote part of the world with which other parts have no communication but by navigation. ‘*Surely the isles*

shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring my sons from far. It is exceeding manifest that this chapter is a prophecy of the prosperity of the Church in its most glorious state on earth in the latter days; and I cannot think that anything else can be here intended but America by the isles that are afar off, from whence the first-born sons of that glorious day shall be brought.—What is chiefly intended is not the *British* isles, nor any isles near the other continent; this prophecy therefore seems plainly to point out America.—God has already put that honour upon the other continent that Christ was born there literally, and there made the *purchase* of redemption. So, as Providence observes a kind of equal distribution of things, it is not unlikely that the great spiritual birth of Christ, and the most glorious *application* of redemption, is to begin in this.”—“There are several things which seem to me to argue that the sun of righteousness, the sun of the new heavens and the new earth, when he rises, shall rise in the west, contrary to the course of things in the old heavens

and earth. And if we may suppose that this glorious work of God shall begin in any part of America, I think, if we consider the circumstances of the settlement of New England, it must needs appear the most likely of all the American colonies to be the place where this work shall principally take its rise."

Assuming that the western continent will be the scene of the second advent, the good President indulges his imagination so far as to calculate the probable amount of human beings at the end of the Millennium, and hence the proportion of the Elect. "The number of the inhabitants of the earth will doubtless then be vastly multiplied; and the number of redeemed ones much more. If we should suppose that glorious day to last no more than literally a *thousand years*, and that, at the beginning of that thousand years, the world of mankind should be just as numerous as it is now, and that the number should be *doubled*, during that time of great health and peace and the universal blessing of Heaven, *once* only in a hundred years, the number at the end

of the thousand years would be more than a *thousand* times greater than it is now: And if it should be doubled once in *fifty* years, then at the end of the thousand years there would be more than a *million* inhabitants on the face of the earth where there is *one* now.”—“I think we shall be very moderate in our conjectures, if we say it is probable that there will be a *hundred thousand* times more that will actually be redeemed to God by Christ’s blood, during that period of the Church’s prosperity, than ever had been before from the beginning of the world to that time.”*

It can give no one pleasure to see such crude speculation proceeding from the pen of the acute author of the Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will. But, in pursuing the phantoms of his imagination, and thereby perverting the sense of Holy Scripture, he only participated in a species of delirium which appears inseparable from such unlicensed prophesying. The learned Dr Bur-

* Edwards’s Works, vol. vi. p. 54, and vol. ii. p. 461.

net, in like manner, whose hypothesis admits the conflagration prior to the beginning of the Millennium, finds himself deeply perplexed in regard to the genealogy of those furious infidels who, under the name of Gog and Magog, are destined to assail the tranquillity of the holy people, and thereby to bring upon themselves a sudden and complete destruction. To liberate his scheme from this objection, he permits the spirit of conjecture to carry him so far as to suggest that those wicked nations may perhaps spring out of the earth, in a manner somewhat similar to that in which the ancient philosophers imagined the inferior animals to be generated in the mud of the Nile !*

* Had Dr Burnet understood the Millennium in the limited sense of the Jews, and as being confined to the Elect People, the descendants of Abraham, as well as to the Holy Land which was given to them as an inheritance, he would have experienced no difficulty in adjusting all the parts of his theory. The original Millennarians contemplated no triumph but such as belonged to the House of Israel, and no happiness which was not reserved for the sons of Jacob ; their felicities during a thousand years being perfectly consistent with the supposition

In a word, there is hardly any expedient, however desperate, or any sacrifice of sense, learning, and consistency, however great, to which the advocates of this antiquated hypothesis have not had recourse, with the view of recommending their conclusions to the religious world. Even the author of the "Brief Inquiry into the Prospects of the Church of Christ," by attempting to be learned above what is written, inflicts an injury upon the cause which he is most desirous to maintain. "I would venture," says he, "to ask with confidence, whether any other felicity than the unbroken dominion and blessed presence of Christ upon the EARTH be recorded as a source of expectation, amidst the prophetic pages of Scripture?"—"It may perhaps facilitate the apprehension of the foregoing statements to connect them with the following considerations:—*First*, that the reign of Christ and the risen Saints does by no

that most other nations would be in a state of subjection and even of the most degrading thralldom. The *world*, in Jewish phraseology, usually meant nothing more than the country inhabited by the favoured tribes.

means *limit* their abode to the surface of the earth over which they will be commissioned to rule. The scene presented to the eye of the servant of Elisha may seem to the mind an illustration of this idea. He beheld in *the regions of the air* 'chariots of fire and horses of fire.' It may not be improbable that these regions, purified from the rebel hosts which now occupy them under the Prince of the Power of the Air, will afford a *local dwelling* to the redeemed, and that from thence they may descend, in fulfilment of the beneficent office assigned to them on the earth, either to mingle *visibly* or *invisibly* among those whose welfare and virtue they will rejoice to promote. *Secondly*, that although this earth, during the millennial period, and yet more gloriously after the final judgment of the wicked, will be a scene of happiness and perfect order, it may not, however, be the *exclusive* region of the felicity of redeemed man. As the birth-place of the son of David, the scene of his agonies, conquest, and exaltation, we may suppose a special honour to be ever connected with it. This world, then, limited

as it is in its material dimensions, may yet be a structure peculiarly dear to beings more exalted than its own inhabitants. Shall such a scene, rescued from the assaults of evil, adorned with new beauty, the birth-place of the Redeemer, the radiant theatre of his beneficent forbearance, compassion, and grace, be blotted from existence, and draw forth by its fall a shout of malignant joy, if even *malignant* joy can be felt in the regions of despair? Is it necessary to *circumscribe* the exercise of human power and bliss in its glorified condition to this earth, fair and beautiful as it will then have become? May not the glorified saints range with happy eagerness through unnumbered regions of tranquillity and joy?" &c.*

A multitude of quotations from a variety of other authors on the same side might be adduced to show that the study of the Millennium, as an article of Christian faith, has a very bad practical tendency; inasmuch as it carries the mind not only to a false interpretation of Scripture, but also

* A Brief Inquiry, &c. By the Hon. Gerard T. Noel, A. M.

to very dangerous views respecting the Divine government of the world. But, instead of pursuing so unpleasant a task to any greater length, I shall proceed to illustrate a somewhat similar discrepancy in the opinions of the same class of men in regard to the commencement of the “thousand years ;” and thereby to point out another disadvantage to the cause of truth, arising, like the former, from groundless conjecture and presumptuous argument on one of the most sacred and mysterious of subjects.

It would appear that some writers, at a period anterior to the sixth century, had begun to suspect that the word Millennium was only a general expression for an indefinite length of time, and might, consequently, be applied to any number of years regarded as an epoch. For instance, we find in a commentary on the book of Revelation, written by Andrew, the bishop of the Cappadocian Cæsarea, that “some confine the above-mentioned thousand years to the short period of our Lord’s ministry, from his baptism to his ascension into heaven ; being no more than three years, or

three years and a half. Others think that after the completion of six thousand years shall be the first resurrection from the dead, which is to be peculiar to the Saints alone, who are to be raised up that they may dwell again on this earth where they had given proofs of patience and fortitude ; and that they may live here a thousand years in honour and plenty : after which will be the general resurrection. But the church receives neither of these interpretations ; for we remember what our Lord said to the Sadducees, that the righteous shall be as the angels which are in heaven ; as also of Paul, who says that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink. By the ‘ thousand years,’ therefore, we understand the *time of the preaching of the Gospel*, or the time of the Gospel Dispensation.”*

The opinion that the Christian religion was only to continue during a thousand years,—the period of the prophetic Millennium,—was entertained by many in the fourth and fifth centuries,

* See Lardner’s Works, quarto edition, vol. iii. p. 44.

and was, in fact, afterwards adopted by several commentators. As a striking proof how deeply this notion had taken root in the Church, after the Jewish expectation had vanished, we may mention the deep and general alarm with which the Christian world was seized when the tenth century drew near its close. Among the opinions, says Mosheim, which dishonoured so frequently the Latin Church, and produced from time to time such violent agitations, none occasioned such a general panic, or such dreadful impressions of terror and dismay, as a notion which now prevailed of the immediate approach of the day of judgment. This notion, which took its rise from a remarkable passage in the Revelation of St John, and had been entertained by some doctors in the preceding century, was advanced publicly by many at this time; and, spreading itself with an amazing rapidity through the European provinces, it threw them into the deepest consternation and anguish: for they imagined that St John had clearly foretold that, after a thousand years from the birth of Christ, Satan

was to be let loose from his prison, that Antichrist was to come, and the conflagration and destruction of the world were to follow these great and terrible events. Hence prodigious numbers of people abandoned all their civil connexions, their parents and relatives, and, giving over to the churches and monasteries all their lands, treasures, and worldly effects, repaired with the utmost precipitation to Palestine, where they imagined that Christ would descend from heaven to judge the world. Others devoted themselves by a solemn and voluntary oath to the service of the churches, convents, and priesthood, whose slaves they became in the most rigorous sense of that word, performing daily their heavy tasks; and all this from a notion that the Supreme Judge would diminish the severity of their sentence, and look upon them with a more favourable and propitious eye, on account of their having made themselves the slaves of his ministers. When an eclipse of the sun or moon happened to be visible, the cities were deserted, and their miserable

inhabitants fled for refuge to deep caverns, and hid themselves among the craggy rocks, and under the bending summits of steep mountains. The opulent attempted to bribe the Deity and the saintly tribe by rich donations conferred upon the sacerdotal and monastic orders, who were looked upon as the immediate vicegerents of Heaven. In many places, temples, palaces, and noble edifices, both public and private, were suffered to decay, or were deliberately pulled down, from a notion that they were no longer of any use, as the final dissolution of all things approached. This general delusion was indeed opposed and combated by the discerning few, who endeavoured to dispel these groundless terrors, and to efface in the minds of the people the impression from which they arose. But their attempts were ineffectual; nor could the dreadful apprehensions of the superstitious multitude be entirely removed before the conclusion of the century. Then, when they saw that the so-much-dreaded period had passed away without the arrival of any great calamity,

they began to understand that St John had not really foretold what they so much feared.*

It is probable that the detection of an error which had created a sensation at once so painful and ridiculous throughout Europe, would have

* Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 429. Almost all the donations which were made to the Church in the tenth century carry evident marks of this groundless panic which had seized all the European nations ; the reasons for these benefactions being generally expressed in the following words,—*appropinquante mundi termino*, “the end of the world being now at hand.” Among the many undeniable testimonies that we have from ancient records of this universal delusion, we shall confine ourselves to a remarkable passage in the *Apologeticum* of Abbo, abbot of Fleury, addressed to Arnoul, bishop of Orleans, as published by the learned Francis Pithou, in the *Codex Canonum Ecclesiae Romanae*. The words of Abbo are as follows : —“ De fine quoque mundi, coram populo sermonem in ecclesia Parisiorum adolescentulus audivi, quod statim finito mille annorum numero Antichristus adveniret, et non longo post tempore universale judicium succederet ; cui predicationi ex evangeliis, ac apocalypsi, et libro Danielis, qua potui virtute restiti. Denique et errorem, qui de fine mundi inolevit, abbas meus beatae memoriae Richardus, sagaci animo propulit, postquam literas a Lothariensibus accepit, quibus me respondere jussit. Nam fama pene totum mundum impleverat, quod, quando Annunciatio Dominica in Parasceue contigisset, absque ullo scrupulo finis sæculi esset.”

for ever exposed the absurdity of Millennarianism, had not the Protestants in the sixteenth century been taught to identify their great enemy the Pope with the Antichrist who is described in the Apocalypse, and whose overthrow is destined to precede the glory of the thousand years. Hence it became the leading object with theological writers in Germany, England, and the Low Countries, to discover the several points of resemblance between the prophetic beast and the Roman Pontiff, as also to determine the period at which the tyranny of that Man of Sin would be succeeded by the expected manifestation of Divine power in behalf of the saints and martyrs of the true faith.

Grotius, on a principle not so satisfactory as he usually required for his opinions, fixed the commencement of the Millennium in the days of Constantine, when the protection of the empire was formally extended to the Gospel of Christ. It is true, that, prior to the date at which the imperial convert professed his adherence to the new religion, the Roman state was universally regarded

by the Doctors of the Church as the Antichrist whose power prevented the glorious consummation upon which their hopes were encouraged to rest ; and for this reason it might appear to the learned commentator just named, that no epoch more suitable could be chosen for the beginning of those happy years, in which peace and abundance were to be showered upon the true believers. But as, according to this hypothesis, the Millennium must have expired in the fourteenth century, the conclusions of the Batavian expositor are now treated with contempt.

Other grounds were sought, on which to support a structure now deemed essential to the defence of the Protestant doctrines relative to the Popedom. From calculations which were supposed to fix the establishment of the spiritual autocrat in the full possession of power, an attempt was made to anticipate with certainty the era of his dethronement ; for as the space during which this enemy of the Saints was to be permitted to exercise authority seemed limited to twelve hundred and sixty years, nothing more was ne-

cessary for the purpose just stated than to ascertain the date at which that interval of despotism commenced. Imagining, then, that the Pope had gained the summit of his usurped dominion about the beginning of the fifth century, it was generally believed, about the middle of the seventeenth, that the term of his government had approached very near to its end.

In 1662, when the King of France, who had taken offence at an insult inflicted upon his representative at Rome, sent some troops against the Papal sovereign, the Protestants everywhere exulted in the fulfilment of their own wishes, as well as of certain popular predictions. But the peace which soon afterwards followed, as it left the ecclesiastical states in possession of their wonted integrity and independence, once more convinced the Millennarians that they had proceeded on a false principle, and that the fall of Antichrist was not yet by and by.

A book was published in London in the year 1656, which foretold that Rome would be destroyed in 1666, and that the day of judgment would

happen in 1711. A Dutch author much about the same time announced the end of the world and the second advent of Christ, on the ground of an approaching conjunction of certain planets in the sign Sagittarius,—a phenomenon which had not been repeated since the great flood in the days of Noah. Comenius, trusting to an authority equally deceptive, selected the year 1673 for the epoch of the first resurrection; having discovered some event in the history of Popery, 1260 years before that date, which left no doubt as to the establishment of the fierce Antichristian dynasty which warred against the Saints. Several other writers supported the same conclusions, particularly Serarius, who, adopting the astronomical hypothesis already mentioned, saw the destiny of the human race unfolded in the motions of the heavenly bodies.

These speculations called into the field the only able opponent who appeared against the Chiliasts or Millennarians during the seventeenth century. This champion of common sense came forward in the person of Maresius, who attacked

his adversaries with the two-edged sword of reason and of Scripture. He reminded Serarius that the doctrine which he held in respect to the earthly reign of Christ rendered the Reformed Religion odious to all the governments of Europe ; for, as his followers maintained that the prosperity of the Church depended upon the destruction of all temporal power, they excited the people to insurrection, in order that they might bring in the golden age of Christianity, or the reign of a thousand years. He upbraided the Chiliasts with their ignorant presumption in fixing from time to time the end of the world, although some of their prophets had lived to see the failure of their own predictions. Still, however, the deep-rooted expectation continued to be cherished by a large body among the Protestants ; who, incensed by the intolerant spirit of the Church which they had just abandoned, took pleasure in identifying her head with the Apocalyptic monster of ancient times.*

* “ When I considered,” says Maresius, “ this multitude of

Every reader of English history is acquainted with the excesses to which millennarian doctrines carried the fifth-monarchy men during the period of the Commonwealth. Hume tells us, “they required that government itself should be abolished, and all human powers be laid in the dust, in order to pave the way for the dominion of Christ, whose second coming they suddenly expected.” They were, indeed, a set of wrongheaded and turbulent enthusiasts, who, acting upon this foolish illusion, aimed at the subversion of all human government, and resolved to acknowledge no sovereign authority but that of ‘King Jesus.’ “They

Christian doctors who have foretold for so many ages a revolution of the faith, I was curious to know whether there were not such kind of people in other religions. Among other things I found that there were some Mahometans who leave legacies to an unknown prophet who is to come and deliver the world from the tyranny of Antichrist. And the Persians believe that Mahomet Mahadi, the son of Hassan, second son of Ali, is not dead, but lies hid in some place from whence he will come forth one day to refute all errors, and to reunite all men in the same belief. He will preach on horseback, and begin to do it in the city of Mazadel, where there is always a horse kept ready for him.”—*Chiliasmus Enervatus*, 1664.

were," says Bishop Burnet, "really in expectation every day when Christ should appear." Actuated by this feeling, they at length took up arms under the direction of Venner, an enthusiastic declaimer, who, in his little conventicle, warmed the hearts of his audience with a passionate description of the fifth universal monarchy under the personal government of the Lord our Saviour, and inflamed their zeal by an assurance that the time was now arrived when the Saints were to take the kingdom. To introduce this reign of peace and love, they issued from their meeting-house on a Sunday morning, well supplied with weapons, and fully determined either to subvert the throne of Charles or to perish in the attempt. Their ardour supplied the place of discipline; and it was not until they had tried their strength with the train-bands and horse-guards, that they were finally overcome, and punished as rebels against the state.

Nor was it only in the extravagances of the ignorant multitude that the general belief in the Millennium was made manifest during that

troubled period. The same expectation is expressed in the writings of divines, and even in the effusions of poetry. No work was undertaken without a reference to the speedy arrival of the Redeemer, and to the probable interruption of all earthly pursuits. Even the gigantic mind of Milton appears to have yielded to the common impression, and to have shared in that mixed feeling of joy and dread with which the second advent was necessarily contemplated. In an eloquent address to the Saviour he uses the following words:—"As thou didst dignify our fathers' days with many revelations above all the foregoing ages since thou tookest the flesh, so thou canst vouchsafe to us, though unworthy, as large a portion of thy spirit as thou pleasest: for who shall prejudice thy all-governing will, seeing the power of thy grace is not passed away with the primitive times, as fond and faithless men imagine; but thy kingdom is now at hand, and thou standest at the door. Come forth out of thy Royal Chambers, O Prince of all the kings of the earth! put on the visible robes of thy Imperial

Majesty, take up that unlimited sceptre which thy Almighty Father hath bequeathed thee : for now the voice of thy Bride calls thee, and all nature sighs to be renewed.”*

Before leaving this period I shall transcribe a quotation from a pamphlet published in 1654, entitled “ Knowledge of the Times,” and dedicated to the Faithful Witnesses of Christ within the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland. “ As it was the great masterpiece of Satan’s policy at the time of Christ’s *first* coming, when he set up his spiritual kingdom, to put that generation of men altogether upon looking after the *Outward* Kingdom, drawing them thereby to a neglect of that kingdom which they in that day ought specially to have attended to : So is it his great engine of policy in the days a little before Christ’s *second* coming, when now Christ is indeed and in truth entering into the world to set up his Outward Kingdom, to turn the eyes of this generation altogether upon the *Spiritual*

* Prose Works, p. 312, edit. 1697.

Kingdom, drawing them thereby off from the Outward; hereby cunningly holding forth one truth as a bait to allure them from another, and endeavouring to draw the hearts of men from the Great Truth of the Generation, by presenting them with some other truth every way as glorious considered in itself (the time and season only, which is still the thing that adds beauty to Generation-truth, set aside) as the truth itself of the Generation.”*

The notions of the more modern Chiliasts are familiar to every one who has allowed himself to take any interest in a subject so entirely destitute of Christian authority and usefulness. The ‘Personal Appearance’ is taught with the same degree of confidence which animated the harangues of Nepos and Apollonarius; and calculations to determine the precise era of the second advent are submitted to the world with an air of certainty which

* The name of the author was John Tillinghast.—See *Apology for Millennial Doctrine*, by William Anderson, Glasgow. 1830.

was not assumed even by the boldest of the primitive fathers. All profess to be guided by the same principles and to proceed on the same ground, while the result proves most completely that there is neither principle nor basis on which to rest their several hypotheses. For example, according to the chief authorities who have ventured to instruct the Christian public, the commencement of the Millennium is ascertained as follows :

Archbp. Usher dates it at the birth of Christ.

Grotius, in the reign of Constantine.

J. C. Romig in . . 1530.

Mede — . . 1716.

Frere — . . 1793.

Faber — . . 1865.

Hales — . . 1880.

Bishop Newton — . . 1987.

Lowman — . . 2016.

Sir I. Newton — . . 2036.

In all these instances, the calculations of Usher and of Grotius excepted, it is presumed that 1260

years before the several dates fixed for the second advent, the power of the Beast was fully established at Rome. The authors, moreover, derive some assistance from the order and duration of the Seals, Trumpets, and Vials, which are understood to denote certain events in the history of the Church—the woman who fled into the wilderness and was persecuted forty-two months. But the difficulties which surround the subject may be estimated from the universal disagreement of the expositors. The Bishop of Utica makes the Devil ride three of the horses under the first seal, and Jesus Christ the fourth; but the writer of the “Apocalypse of Jesus Christ Explained” seats Constantine on the white horse, Theodosius on the red, Honorius on the black, and Justinian on the pale or green horse. Mr Cunningham opens the first seal at the crucifixion of our Lord; Frere postpones it till three centuries later. Cunningham wraps up the six first seals in the seventh, and assigns the four first trumpets to the second; Croly makes the seals consecutive, and assigns the four first trumpets to the third.

Pastorini makes seals, trumpets, and vials all begin together. Dean Woodhouse is of opinion that the subject of the seals is the state of the Church from first to last ; and the subject of the trumpets is its persecutions. Another thinks the seals represent the Western Empire, and the trumpets the Eastern. One finds the Triumph of the Church under the seventh seal, and another the French Revolution. One refers the four first trumpets to the fourth century ; another reads in them the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the wars of Louis the Fourteenth. Nay, the very foundations of all interpretation are disputed. Maitland denies that prophetic days are equivalent to years, and Schenck wrote a dissertation to prove that “ times ” do not mean times, but empires.

But the greatest diversity of opinion appears in those who strive to earn the character of “ him that hath understanding,” by counting the number of the Beast. If we may trust to the fidelity of manuscripts, Irenæus suggested the following hypothesis :—“ Noah,” says he, “ was six hun-

dred years old when the flood came to punish the apostasy of the world. Sixty and six cubits were the dimensions of the statue which Nebuchadnezzar set up to tempt the Israelites to idolatry, when three of their chiefs, refusing to comply, were thrown into the heated furnace. Now, that image represents the Antichrist, who is worshipped of all them that dwell on the earth; therefore the 600 years of Noah, and the sixty and six cubits of the image, show the number of the name whose apostasies, accumulated through 6000 years, shall be punished with a deluge of fire."

The various explanations of this mystical number are thus enumerated by Mr Croly in Greek.

O Nicetes, Gensericus, Benedictus,

Ο Νικητης, Γενσερικος, Βενεδικτος,

Loutherana, Saxoneios, Bonneparte.

Λουθερανα, Σαξονειος, Βοννεπαρτε.

Jerome discovers the same number in Ευινας, a serpent-finder; Grotius detects it in Ουλπιος, a name of Trajan. Pastorini finds it in Μαομετις; Irenæus in Λατεινος and Τειταν. In Latin we have

these solutions—Vicarius Filii Dei ; Ludovicus ; Silvester Secundus ; Linus Secundus ; D. T. Julianus, and Cæsar Atheus. The Hebrew language has likewise supplied its dark sayings ; and we may add, that there is not a form of speech or dialect under the sun in which many words might not be found whose numerical value would amount to six hundred and sixty-six.*

The effect produced upon serious minds by the contemplation of such irreconcilable differences among the expositors of Scripture, cannot have

* See British Critic for April 1830, page 333.

The remark of Bayle must frequently recur to him who reads the deep commentaries on the Apocalypse, which ever and anon solicit the attention of theological readers :—" It is a common saying that God forgives everything, and that man forgives nothing ; but that maxim is false with respect to the commentators on the Revelation. It is very probable that God has not the same indulgence as the public for the boldness wherewith they handle his oracles and expose them to the contempt of infidels. A learned divine observes, that Comenius lost nothing of his credit, though he had deceived the people a hundred times by his visions : He always passed for a great prophet ; so true it is, that men are pleased to be deceived in some things."—BAYLE, COMENIUS.

any tendency to confirm either their faith or their comfort. It must be obvious even to the least instructed, that divines, century after century, have spent their time in pursuing shadows; or, at all events, that they have sought to discover a portion of the future history of our race, which Eternal Wisdom hath thought proper to conceal in the deepest darkness. And what must be the impression on minds less piously disposed, or more imperfectly fixed in the principles of belief? What ground of triumph, again, is thereby afforded to the sceptic, in whose eyes the fanciful interpretations of the theologian, and the repeated failure of his conjectures, appear as the strongest proof that, as far as prophecy is concerned, wisdom and doubt are synonymous terms?

Nor is there less reason to apprehend danger from the derangement inflicted upon the popular faith, when assailed by the mystical doctrines and powerful imagery of the Millennarians. We have not, perhaps, any just cause to fear that our countrymen will again desert their duties and

their dwellings, flee towards Palestine to meet the Judge of all the earth, or sacrifice, in their native land, their wealth and their liberty to the fanaticism which has deceived them. It might be deemed arrant folly, too, were we to express any alarm lest another Venner, at the head of a deluded mob, should buckle on carnal weapons, raise troops in the name of the Messiah, and invite all men "to take arms to assist the Lord Jesus Christ." Such extravagances are in some degree obviated by the cool temperament and rather sceptical views which the people at large have recently assumed, in regard to the more recondite tenets of speculative theology. The greatest evil, perhaps, that we have to encounter respects the disturbed and anxious feelings which a sincere belief in the doctrines of Chiliasm cannot fail to excite in weak imaginations and tender consciences. The female mind, especially, which, like Charity itself, is ready to believe all things, is most susceptible of those terrors which are associated with the second coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven. And ought we to be surprised at any

disorder which may accrue to the nerves or to the intellect, when men, deemed sane on all other points, and invested, too, with the office of Christian ministers, take upon them to name the very year when the heavens shall be wrapped in flames, and when the earth and all that is in it shall be burned up? Mr Noel, for instance, quotes with approbation the writings of an author, who said, “If these things happen not to us but to our children, (*as they most certainly will before the third generation is swept away,*) is it not our business to prepare ourselves for them, to meditate on them, and to warn as many people as we can prudently, lest their blood should be required at our hands, were they to fall because of a surprise? Let us hasten by our prayers that glorious kingdom, when *saints raised from the dead* shall converse with *living saints*, and the world of spirits be manifested in a great measure to the *material world*.”*

It might sound harshly, were I to say that such

* Fletcher's Posthumous Letters.

assurances indicate the utmost degree of presumption and folly, and are calculated to make wise men lament, and to raise among all others the shout of merriment and derision. Such considerations ought to induce us to discard the Millennium altogether from the pale of Christian doctrine. It possesses no authority to which a disciple of Christ is bound to pay any respect. It came from the Jews originally, and it still forms an article of their traditional faith, as connected with the advent of their expected Messias. The early Christians, it is true, held it in its most literal acceptation, and rested their belief on the same grounds which supported the creed of the synagogue. But, notwithstanding this undeniable fact, it cannot be regarded in any other light than as one of those Jewish errors which adhered to the majority of such members of the Church as had previously studied in the school of the Rabbis ; and which were not altogether exploded until the Law and the Gospel were finally separated in practice as well as in theory.

The expediency of rejecting the Millennium

from the institutes of religion becomes more strikingly manifest, when we consider the circumstance, which has been already stated, that it is incapable of being reduced to an allegory without doing violence to the ordinary principles of human speech. Every one, who reviews with candour the attempts which have been made at various times to convert the descriptions of the Apocalypse into a figure, will appreciate the honest simplicity of Joseph Mede, who acknowledged, that, “if the text would admit another sense more free of paradox, I had rather listen to it ; *but I find it not.*” Hence, as the literal interpretation of the primitive Millennarians cannot now be followed, because all the grounds upon which such views were originally entertained have been long ago removed by the mere lapse of time ; and as the metaphorical exposition labours under objections so completely insuperable as to prove clearly that the narrative was meant to be understood according to the letter ; we may conclude that the Apocalyptic visions have no relation to our times, and that they may therefore be safely omitted in our

theological systems, as not essential to the regulation, either of our faith or manners.*

* Every reader must be aware, that the doubtful reception of the Revelation into the canon of Scripture was confirmed by the Council of Trent, and ratified by the Pope, who, as an historian observes, laboured under a just apprehension that the Grammarians might gain a victory over the Theologians, were the question put to issue on the ground of style or composition. The sentence of Dionysius of Alexandria still remained on record ; and it was presumed that every man capable of comparing St John's Gospel with the Apocalypse in the original language, would agree with the ancient prelate, that the two works could not have been written by the same author. Eusebius, who divides all the Sacred Books into three classes, includes the Revelation in the second,—as a treatise which might be read for instruction, but which was not fully inspired. Cyril of Jerusalem rejects it from his list of canonical compositions ; insinuating at the same time, it has been suspected, that it ought to be placed among the Apocryphal. The Council of Laodicea, in the fourth century, proceeded on the same principle, and refused to admit the Apocalypse as an authentic work. At a period somewhat later, however, it was almost generally received, so far, at least, as to be inserted in the lists of those writers who undertook to guide their contemporaries in the selection of inspired tracts ; for it is well known that more than four hundred years had passed away before the Canon of Scripture was placed on such a footing as to command the assent of the whole Christian world. This is manifest from the advice given by St Augustin to his people, about the year 426 ;

This determination is not meant to decide any question that might be raised in regard to the authority of the Revelation, as an inspired work, or even with respect to the private opinions of the Apostles concerning the time of the second advent. On these two heads the judgments of learned men have been very various in every age of the Church, and no approach to unanimity has been made among divines in these latter days. The sole ground, therefore, of the conclusion

an exertion of pastoral care which would have been altogether unnecessary had the Canon been already fixed :—" In receiving Canonical Scriptures, let him who desires carefully to study them follow the judgment of the greater number of Catholic churches ; among which those certainly ought to be reckoned which are Apostolic Sees, and have had letters of Apostles sent to them. This rule, therefore, he will observe in regard to Canonical Scriptures ; he will prefer such as are received by all Catholic churches to those which some do not receive : and, with regard to such as are not received by all, he will prefer those which are received by many and eminent churches to those which are received by few churches, and of less authority. But if he should find some received by the greater number of churches and others by the more eminent (which however will scarcely happen,) I think such Scriptures ought to be held by him as of equal authority."—*De Doct. Christ.* lib. ii. c. 28.

which I have ventured to state, has been already laid before the reader in a kind of *argumentum ex necessitate* : We cannot hold the Millennium in the sense in which it was held by the Jews and primitive Christians, because we do not expect the Redeemer to exercise a personal reign at Jerusalem ; we cannot admit the exposition which is given of it by the school of Dr Whitby, because it assumes that facts are mere figures of rhetoric ; and hence, being compelled to reject both, we necessarily infer, either that the obscure notice of what St Jerome is pleased to call the “ Fable of a Thousand Years,” was not meant by Divine Providence to reveal the secrets of futurity, or that it is not yet so well understood as to justify the interpretations of it which have been recently obtruded upon the world.*

* Since the former part of this Discourse was printed, I have seen in a work of the learned Mosheim a confirmation of my opinion respecting the ancient opponents of the Millennium, namely, that they did not deny the doctrine generally, nor refuse to join in the expectation of a Personal Appearance and an earthly kingdom, but merely objected to the views of

It has been usual, during the two last centuries, among such divines as oppose the millennial hypothesis, to refer all that is said in the writings of the Apostles respecting the end of the world and the coming of Christ to the destruction of Jerusalem and the dissolution of the Jewish state. But even here there is a great want of unanimity. Hammond and Lightfoot, on the one side, are opposed by Whitby and Horsley on the other.

sensual enjoyment which were held out to the faithful by Cerinthus, Papias, and their disciple:—"Caius quidem presbyter Romanus, in disputatione cum Proclo, crimini hoc Cerintho dabat, quod terrenum Christi regnum omni deliciarum genere refertum polliceretur. Verum ipsa ejus verba extra controversiam ponunt, non *tam ipsum Christi regnum* quam corporeas voluptates in illo regno, quas Cerinthus promisisse, sive vere sive falso, putabat, ab eo vituperari. Duæ nimirum erant de hoc Christi regno illa aetate sententiæ: Alii sanctos homines in eo iisdem legibus victuros esse, arbitrabantur, quibus hodie vivunt homines, omnibusque voluptatibus quæ ex sensibus nasci possunt, liberaliter fruituros: Alii vero sensuum licet delectationes non omnes nova illa Christi civitate excluderent, quod facere nullo modo multas ob causas poterant, maximam tamen ejus felicitatem in animorum oblectationibus et gaudiis positam fere, censebant."—*De Rebus Christianorum ante Con. Mag.* p. 722.

For example, the two former maintain that St Peter could not, by the description which he gives in the third chapter of his Second Epistle, intend to denote the circumstances which are to render so solemn the close of this earthly scene, but merely the consternation and sufferings which were to accompany the Roman arms in their last attack on the capital of Judea. This opinion, much more respectable for its object than for its correctness or consistency, rests entirely on the fact, that the siege of Jerusalem took place three or four years after the letter in question was written, whereas the end of the world has not yet arrived.* Because the Apostle spoke of the event to which his description applied as being at hand, and as being presently looked for by those whom he addressed, it has been concluded that he must necessarily have meant the demolition of the holy city, and not the return of Christ to judge the world, and to receive his saints to glory.

* Grotius maintains that the Second Epistle of St Peter was written after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Whitby justly remarks, that this opinion is wholly new, and contrary to the judgment of all the ancients who own this epistle. It is evident, says he, that the inspired writer must have meant the end of the world, from these very words,—“ But the heavens and earth that now are, by the same word are kept in store, reserved to fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men :” and, “ the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the earth, also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” “ To interpret all these words,” he continues, “ only of the destruction of Jerusalem, is to turn them into metaphor and allegory ; whereas St Peter plainly says, that, as the old world was destroyed by water, so shall the world that now is be destroyed by fire. Here, then, is no room for allegories or allegorical expositions ; for as the heavens and earth were destroyed by water, so are they to be destroyed by fire ; and if, in the first place, you understand the natural material world, you must also under-

stand it in the second,—they are both allegories or neither.” “ Were the Apostle speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened thirty-seven years after the death of Christ, and was, according to our Lord’s prediction, to fall out whilst some of those to whom he spoke were yet living, what need was there of saying that *one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*, when he was speaking, it seems, of that which he knew was to happen before a few years were expired ? Lastly, it is evident that he must have meant the end of the world by this solemn exhortation :—*Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.* This, I say, sounds too high for the destruction of Jerusalem, in which the people of Pontus and Galatia could not be much concerned ; but it is an exhortation very proper for those who had the lively idea of the conflagration of the

world, and the tremendous judgment and perdition of ungodly men, then set before them.”*

The principal objection to this view of the apostolical warning respects the terms in which it is expressed, and the inferences by which it must almost necessarily have been succeeded in the minds of those to whom it was addressed. Bishop Horsley endeavours to reconcile the language of St Peter to the conclusions of his commentator, by suggesting, that, although the assurance as to the coming of our Lord was to be taken *literally*, the words might, nevertheless, be conceived to involve a *figure*, so far as we consider the precise period. “If,” says he, “we recur to the passages wherein the approach of Christ’s kingdom is maintained, we shall find that in most of them, I believe

* The view which Whitby takes of this passage is not quite in unison with his arguments against the literal acceptation of the Millennium ; it being his object throughout his celebrated Treatise to prove, that neither the Apostles, nor the Fathers generally in the first age of the Church, believed in the near approach of the day of the Lord,—the era of the conflagration, and of the new heaven and the new earth.

it might be said in all, the mention of the *final judgment* might be of much importance to the writer's argument, while that of the *destruction of Jerusalem* could be of none. It should seem that in all these passages the *coming* is to be taken literally for our Lord's personal coming at the last day ; and that the *figure* is rather to be sought in those expressions which, in their literal meaning, might seem to announce his immediate arrival. The terms *soon* and *late* are to be very differently understood, when applied to the great operations of Providence, and to the ordinary occurrences of human life. *Soon* and *late* are words whereby a comparison is rather intended of the mutual proportion of different intervals of time than the magnitude of any one by itself defined. And the same thing may be said to be coming either soon or late, according as the distance of it is compared with a longer or shorter period of duration. Thus, although the day of judgment was removed undoubtedly by an interval of many ages from the age of the Apostles, yet it might in their days be said to be at hand, if its distance from

them was but a small part of its original distance from the creation of the world,—that is, if its distance then was but a small part of the whole period of the world's existence, which is the standard in reference to which, so long as the world shall last, all other portions of time may be by us most properly denominated long or short.”—Alluding to the assurance given by St Paul to the Thesalonians, the learned Prelate observes,—“ Upon this occasion his expressions, taken literally, would imply that he included himself with many of those to whom these consolations were addressed, in the number of those who should remain alive at the last day. This turn of the expression naturally arose from the strong hold that the expectation of the thing in its due season had taken of the writer's imagination, and from his full persuasion of the truth of the doctrine he was asserting, namely, that those who should die before the Lord's coming, and those who should then be alive, would find themselves quite upon an even footing. His expression, however, was so strong, that his meaning was mistaken, or, as I rather think, misre-

presented. There seems to have been a sect in the apostolic age who looked for the resurrection in their own time. But," the Bishop concludes, "whatever St Paul had said of the 'day of Christ's coming as at hand,' was to be understood only of the *certainty* of that coming."*

According to this explanation we are required to believe that the Apostles, although they knew that our Saviour would not come as the judge of the quick and the dead for some thousands of years, had, nevertheless, such a vivid conception of that event, and were so certain of its taking place in its proper time, that they spoke of it as if it were to occur in their own days, and as if the Lord were then actually at hand. In short, the Bishop held, that although the fact spoken of is to be understood literally, yet the expression in which it is conveyed is not to be literally taken; because the sacred writers, animated with their subject, and carried away by a flight of imagination, might very properly describe an event as *being at hand*

* Horsley's Sermons, vol. i. p. 14, &c.

which was not to come to pass for more than twenty centuries.

On this mysterious subject we are presented only with a choice of difficulties. It does not accord with our ordinary notions of inspiration to adopt the sentiment of Grotius in regard to the general belief which prevailed in the apostolic days, and, as he thought, even among the Apostles themselves, that the end of the world was at hand. But it is not more agreeable to our ideas of primitive simplicity and candour to imagine that those holy men would encourage the persecuted Christians to persevere in the profession of the Gospel, by the assurance of the Lord being on the point of returning to the earth to reward the good and to punish the wicked, had they certainly known that the day of judgment was not to take place for many ages. A glowing imagination will no doubt account for much ; but still it appears rather inconsistent with that special guidance which is attributed to the Divine Spirit, to admit, as a principle of scriptural interpretation, that the Apostles wrote on a subject so extremely import-

ant, from excited feelings rather than from clear views of futurity. Nor can we be satisfied with the metaphor supposed to have been used by the inspired penmen, which represents remote occurrences as about to be realized under the eyes of the very persons to whom they wrote. We are struck also with the great improbability that the imaginations of three Apostles should have been heated in the same degree, and that they should all have adopted the very same figurative language in regard to the near approach of the second advent. Nor is the difficulty lessened when we find, from the impression which prevailed generally in the first age, that their declarations were received in a literal sense, and as conveying the assurance that the end of all things was really at hand,—a fact which militates strongly against the supposition that St Paul and St Peter were understood by their contemporaries to have indulged in rhetorical language when they wrote respecting the coming of Christ. Upon the whole, the opinion entertained by Grotius, that the Apostles expected the first resurrection in

their own days, and encouraged the primitive believers to adhere to their faith in the hope of seeing the Redeemer revisit the earth, as the avenger of their wrongs and the rewarder of their constancy, does not appear to be attended with greater difficulties than the hypothesis of those commentators who maintain, that the inspired servants of Christ had recourse to metaphors when they seemed to speak of actual events, and employed, in reference to the most momentous of all inquiries, a language which could hardly fail to be misunderstood, and which, in point of fact, was almost universally misinterpreted. It is in vain that, on this subject, we attempt to escape from obscurity and apparent contradiction ; for which reason we ought to refrain from hasty strictures on the opinions of those learned men, who form their judgment of Sacred Scripture rather from an examination of its contents in their plain literal expression, than from the ingenious glosses of systematic theologians, who see nothing in the Bible but through the medium of a favourite theory.

In concluding his argument against the Millennarians, Dr Whitby becomes a little anxious lest it should be thought that he had ‘discovered too much of the nakedness of the Fathers,’ and thereby, perhaps, undermined their authority in other things, such as the apostolical institution of Episcopacy, the change of the Sabbath, the canon of Scripture, and even points of doctrine derived by them from the inspired founders of our faith. But his own answer to the supposed objection is perfectly satisfactory. “This mistake of the Fathers, in a matter which they received from the traditions and notions of the Jews, will not invalidate their authority in anything delivered by them as witnesses of what they saw with their own eyes, or declared to have been then the practice of the Church of Christ; nor will it affect their testimony in any other doctrine which they neither did nor could receive on the authority of the Jewish Doctors.” The primitive writers were faithful historians, but, generally speaking, very bad critics. The more ancient of their number were deeply tainted with Rabbinical mysticism,

while those of the fourth and fifth centuries expressed too much favour for the philosophy of the Pagan schools; but in both cases we may rely with the utmost confidence upon their honesty as annalists of the Church, and as being most trustworthy depositaries of her ceremonies, her creed, and her institutes.

In this discourse I have used with the opinions of the Fathers, on one point, no less freedom than was taken by Dr Whitby. His object was to prove that the early Christians misunderstood the nature of the Millennium, which, notwithstanding, might, he conjectured, have some spiritual or mystical application to the future history of the world. My object has been to establish the fact, that the impression which prevailed among the primitive believers on that head, originated in a Jewish tradition which had no connexion with the Gospel, and ought therefore never to have occupied their thoughts as members of the Christian Church. Such an undertaking, I trust, will not be deemed unsuitable at the present moment, when a considerable degree of excitement continues to agitate

the religious community relative to the unfulfilled predictions of the ancient prophets. Mr Faber has fixed the date of the new heaven and the new earth at the distance of thirty-five years; and should the Millennium not begin in 1865, according to the calculation of that laborious scholar, Dr Hales has prepared another period of anxiety by discovering, on what he esteems infallible grounds, that the globe and all the works which are thereon shall certainly be dissolved by fire in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighty. It deserves to be remarked, too, that when, from whatever cause, a religious sensation is produced in the public mind, the Jewish notion of a Millennium is instantly revived; and the same hopes, the same follies, the same reasonings, and the same disappointments, take their round, alarm the timid believer, and afford a triumph to the hardened sceptic. It is time that the unlearned and unstable should be protected from such presumptuous absurdity.

DISCOURSE II.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

2 PETER i. 10, 11. *Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure : for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall : for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

WHILE tracing the history of opinion on theological subjects, it would be useful, could we avoid all reference to the persons who have distinguished themselves either as founders of sects, or as controversial writers on the leading doctrines of our Faith. In the progress of disputation, the weakness of our nature shows itself in contracting feel-

ings of dislike towards those who have embraced tenets opposed to our own ; and we come in time to identify the opinion so closely with the man who holds it, that we are thereby insensibly disqualified for acting the part of candid inquirers or of impartial judges in regard to the several points on which we differ.

The words Calvinist and Arminian,—those epithets which distinguish two large bodies of Christians,—sound in our ears like nicknames ; and the great mass of mankind, who believe on authority and follow exactly as they are led, allow their minds to be influenced and their attachments to be riveted by their horror of a mere vocable, long associated in their imaginations with all manner of heresy, error, and spiritual rebellion. The rigid disciple of Calvin sees in the system of Arminius nothing but principles subversive of Christianity, and irreconcilable with the truth of the Gospel as taught by the Apostles ; while, on the other hand, the follower of the last-named divine beholds in the dogmas of the Genevan professor not only the rankest absurdity, but also blasphemy

against God, and a conspiracy against the peace and hopes of the human race.

Could we, then, get quit of the names and hereditary prejudices so inveterately attached to our several theories of belief, we should instantly find ourselves placed in circumstances much more favourable than we now occupy, not only to the discovery of truth, but also to the practice of Christian charity and forbearance. If we could bring our minds to attend solely to the questions at issue, and not at all to the men by whom, from time to time, they have been agitated, we should, it is probable, determine them with meekness and reverence, and finally arrive at one conclusion on all the doctrines at least which respect our faith and practice. But, as such an abandonment of pride and passion is hardly to be expected in an age distinguished by the revival of obsolete controversies, and by the acrimony of the spirit with which these are conducted, it may be enough to suggest, that we might carry on this war of words with less danger of mutual recrimination or breach of personal regard, were we to

reflect that the principal opinions which at present divide the Christian Church are much older than the men with whose names we are accustomed to associate them, and that they were made the subject of discussion two thousand years before either Calvin or Arminius was born.*

These remarks are naturally suggested by the subject now before us—one of the most difficult, or, perhaps, I should rather say one of the most perplexed, which have in these latter days exercised the ingenuity of theologians. To avoid, therefore, all unnecessary collision of opinion, and every appearance of disrespect towards fixed habits of thinking, we shall confine our researches to the language of Scripture, and to those ancient and less disputatious times when that language was originally formed. Hence our inquiry will naturally divide itself into two heads ; *first*, as it respects the Jewish Church ; and, *secondly*, as it applies to the Christian Faith, which, as every

* See Note E in Appendix.

one knows, inherited no small share of the doctrine and phraseology of the former.

I. It must, then, appear obvious, even to the most ignorant reader of the Old and New Testaments, that the word Election, used in a religious sense, took its rise from the peculiar circumstances of the Jewish nation, as the chosen people of God. It pleased the Almighty to select, in preference to all the other nations of the world, the children of Jacob, and descendants of Abraham, to be the depositaries of a more elevated knowledge than could be acquired by natural means, and to be the medium of communicating to future generations certain purposes of benevolence and mercy, in which all the tribes of mankind were deeply interested. This destiny was shadowed forth to them in the oldest revelation that was made to their ancestors. In the writings of their inspired Lawgiver they were described as the elect and favoured people of Jehovah, and as possessing privileges which were still denied to more powerful races of men. They were informed, at the same

time, that the distinction to which they were raised was not to be held as the reward of obedience, nor as any proof of their importance as a political association. On the contrary, they were compelled to listen to the humbling statement, that they were not only the smallest of all people, but that they were, moreover, habitually disobedient and stiff-necked ; and, consequently, that their election for the accomplishment of the lofty purposes contemplated by Heaven had no reference whatever to their personal deserts or peculiar qualifications. The choice of which they were the object originated exclusively in the goodwill and sovereign pleasure of the Almighty, who might, on the same grounds, have conferred this token of his love upon any other of the numerous branches which had already issued from the stock of the Noachic family.

For the reasons now assigned, the Hebrews are throughout the Old Testament acknowledged and described as the chosen, the elect, the peculiar people of Jehovah. Thus, Moses addresses them on a momentous occasion, and says,—“ The

Lord had a delight in thy fathers, and he *chose* their seed after them, even you above all people." Solomon, too, in his devotions at Gibeon, alludes to the same circumstance,—“Thy servant is in the midst of thy people whom thou hast *chosen*, a great people that cannot be counted for multitude.” David, in like manner, reminds his countrymen of their privileges, saying,—“O ye seed of Israel his servant, ye children of Jacob, his *chosen* ones. Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah, and the people whom he hath *chosen* for his own inheritance.” The prophet Isaiah represents the Almighty speaking in the same strain,—“For Jacob, my servant’s sake, and Israel, mine *elect*, I have called thee by thy name.”—“Mine *elect* shall inherit it, and my servant shall dwell there.”—“Mine *elect* shall long enjoy the work of their own hands.” The Jews, moreover, were accustomed to regard themselves in the same light, and to describe their nation as a chosen inheritance. Of Joshua, the successor of Moses, they relate, that, “according to his name, he was made great for the saving of the *elect* of God, and

taking vengeance of the enemies that rose up against them." And it is added, "the *elect* shall praise the holy name of Jehovah."

The reader will observe, that the description now given of the Hebrews as the elect people of God applied to the whole nation, and not to particular individuals; that it respected not, at least immediately and directly, the enjoyment of eternal happiness, but merely the possession of spiritual knowledge and privileges, not extended for the time to other tribes of the human race; and, finally, that it was a calling and election which might be lost through neglect or forfeited by disobedience, as was proved in their subsequent history during the first age of the Gospel.

It was on the same grounds that this people were called the children of God, and were said to be *redeemed, saved, and sanctified* by the Almighty. The "whole congregation," or Church of Israel, was also esteemed *holy*, from the relationship in which the members stood to Jehovah their king; and thus Ezra, after the captivity, remarks, that the "*holy seed* had mingled with the Gentiles."

Even their city and their country were held sacred ; for which reason the prophet Zechariah predicts that the “ Lord shall inherit Judah in the Holy Land.”—“ And ye shall be to me a Holy Nation : thou art a Holy People unto the Lord thy God.” In like manner, they were denominated *Saints*,—an appellation which applied to the people at large, as the chosen vessels of the Divine grace, and the possessors of his Law and his Oracles. In the performance of their national worship they were usually described as the “ congregation of Saints,” or as the “ assembly of Saints.”—“ Let thy priests, O Lord, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in gladness.” On the other hand, they were wont to speak of God as their “ Saviour, their Redeemer, and their Father.” They boasted of their exclusive privilege of being in covenant with the Lord who made heaven and earth. The voice of inspiration had sounded in their ears, saying,—“ I am the Lord your God, who have *separated* you from other people ;” and on this account they thought themselves entitled to exclaim,—“ What nation is

there so great that hath God so near unto them as Jehovah our Lord is in all things that we call upon him for."

But what ought specially to be observed is this, that all these privileges, benefits, and honours, belonged to *all* the children of Israel, without any exception. The Lord Jehovah was a God, King, Saviour, Father, Shepherd, and Redeemer to them all. He saved, taught, redeemed, created, made, and planted them all; and they were *all* his people, nation, heritage, children, flock, and vineyard. Their election, in short, was the election of the whole people of Israel; and the advantages which it conveyed belonged to every individual who bore the name of Jacob and was a descendant of Abraham according to the flesh.*

II. It is by a reference to this election, of which the ancient Hebrews were the object, that we shall be enabled to understand the election of

* See Dr Taylor's Key to the Apostolic Writings. Bishop Watson's Tracts, vol. iii. p. 340.

Christians, as recorded in the New Testament. The Jews, on account of their unbelief and obstinate rejection of our Saviour, were degraded, as a nation at least, from the high rank which they had long enjoyed, in quality of the peculiar people of God; while the Gentiles, who, upon the preaching of the Apostles, received the faith of the Gospel, were substituted in their place, made the visible Church of the Redeemer, and the subjects of the kingdom which he came to establish upon earth. Hence the same language was applied to the new people of God which had been used in regard to the ancient congregation. The Christians were now said to have been *chosen, elected, called, sanctified, taken into covenant, redeemed, saved, delivered, purchased, bought,* and separated from the rest of the world. They were now the peculiar people, the holy nation, the spiritual Israel, the vineyard of the Lord, the *chosen, the elected.* As many as received the Gospel, to them was power given, says St John, to “become the children of God;” and by this step they occupied the station originally granted

to the progeny of Jacob ; they assumed the relationship to the Eternal Father of which the others were wont to boast ; and thus, being blessed with the adoption of sons, they became entitled to all the privileges which attached to that high distinction.

As the Hebrews had been *called* in the person of their ancestor Abraham, so were the Christians called with a similar vocation. St Paul accordingly informs the Roman converts, that they, as well as the other nations to whom the same favour was extended, were “ the called of Jesus Christ.” Writing to the Corinthians, he reminds them that God is faithful, by whom they “ were *called* into the fellowship of his Son.” To the Galatians he says,—“ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that *called* you ;” and to the Ephesians,—“ I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are *called*.” He uses a similar expression in the Second Epistle to his disciple Timothy, reviving in his recollection that “ God hath saved us, and *called* us with a holy calling.” St Peter, too, addressing the

Gentile converts in the Lesser Asia, says,—“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath *called* you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

As the Gentiles were called in a manner similar to that which had been exercised towards the Jews, so were they *elected* and constituted the Church of God on principles strictly analogous. Hence they are usually addressed by the Apostles as the chosen or elect people of the Almighty. In his Epistle to the Colossians, for example, St Paul entreats them to “put on, as the *elect* of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.” The same inspired person describes himself as a servant of God, and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s “*elect*, and the acknowledging of the truth, which is after godliness.” St Peter, again, directs his letter to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, *elect*, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,

through sanctification of the Spirit. And at the end of the same communication he says,—“ The Church that is at Babylon, *elected* together with you, saluteth you.” In a word, as God, at a former period, chose his ancient people the Hebrews, and separated them from the rest of the world to be his visible Church ; so now the whole body of Christians, Gentiles as well as believing Jews, were admitted to the same honour ; being selected from the surrounding nations, and taken into the kingdom of God, to enjoy a more exalted knowledge and worship, and also the hope of everlasting life.

In the latter case, as well as in that of the descendants of Abraham, the election was manifestly of such a nature as to belong to all who were members of the Church, whatever might be the use which they made individually of the privileges and inducements which were thereby put into their possession. Every community of Christians, therefore, was considered by the Apostles as consisting of a body of elect persons ; for which reason, in their several Epistles, they uniformly

address them as such, and perpetually urge upon them motives to perform their duty derived from the very consideration that they now stood in the place of the former "Elect," the original people of God. The property or characteristic arising from the fact of being elected was, in truth, so far from being of a personal or exclusive nature, that it evidently belonged to the whole fraternity of Christians, and was predicable of every individual who professed the faith of the Redeemer, and complied with the external observances of his worship.

Hence it is equally obvious, that the election so commonly mentioned in the Bible did not imply an unalterable destination to future bliss, but merely the enjoyment of certain spiritual advantages, such as knowledge of the Divine Will and the means of grace, which raised the favoured nations for a time above all others in this world, and also presented to them the hope and capacity of acquiring eternal happiness in the world to come. It has, in short, no affinity to the personal election, which afterwards made so great a figure in

the schools of theology, and which has given to the Gospel of Christ an aspect altogether different from that which it exhibited under the hands of his inspired ministers, and of their immediate disciples.

As the two points now mentioned are of great importance to the establishment of the argument we are now conducting, and, consequently, to the acquirement of clear views relative to the doctrine of election, it will be necessary to explain them at somewhat greater length, and especially to adduce more fully the Scriptural authorities upon which they are usually supported.

I have said that the election recorded in the Bible, both under the old economy and the new, was of such a general nature that it applied to all the members of the Church; and hence, in the Apostolic times, to be a Christian, and to be one of the elect, were phrases which meant precisely the same thing. To make good this statement, nothing more is requisite than to read the descriptions which the Sacred Writers were accustomed to prefix to their Epistles addressed to the several Churches. For instance, in his com-

munication to the Romans, St Paul denominates Christians the “*beloved of God, called, holy.*”^{*} To the Corinthians he makes use of a similar designation, and also to the Ephesians, comprehending them all under the several heads of *Saints, Faithful Brethren, and Called*. In like manner, in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, he says, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, dearly beloved, *your election in the Lord.*” It is too obvious to admit of any doubt, that, in all these instances, the Apostle applies the particular term which denotes the relationship in question to *all* the Thessalonians who professed the faith of Christ. In like manner, when St Peter mentions that the Church of Babylon was *elected* at the same time with the Chris-

^{*} I have avoided the awkward expression, “called *to be* saints,” used in the authorised Translation.

tian Societies in Asia Minor, it is manifest that he spoke of an event, the effects of which extended to all the members of that Church,—in other words, that every individual belonging to the communion which he specifies, was one of the Elect in the apostolical sense of the word.

This conclusion is farther strengthened by the remarkable fact, that, while various nations and societies are described by the sacred writers as chosen and elected, these terms are nowhere applied to individual men or women, with the single exception of Rufus, named in the sixteenth chapter of the Romans, and, perhaps, of the “Elect Lady,” whose case will be afterwards considered. It is true that the largest communities are composed of individuals, and that no character can belong to the whole which is not shared to a certain extent by every one who belongs to it; but it is equally true that the character may be of such a nature, like discipline in an army, or sedition in a state, as to respect the society in its corporate capacity, rather than the qualities of its members taken separately. At all events it is worthy of

special attention, considering the numerous errors which have obscured the Doctrine of Election, that, while churches throughout the New Testament are represented as *elected* and *chosen* by God, the same thing is not said of the most distinguished saints, viewed individually, who appear in the pages of that inspired record. St Paul is never announced as an Elect person, nor is St Peter, nor is any one of the Apostles ; the reason of which will appear from the considerations about to be stated in the following sections :—

It has been asserted above, that the Election spoken of in the New Testament denotes the choice of the Gentiles and believing Jews to constitute the Church of Christ in place of the great body of the Hebrew nation who rejected the Divine Messiah ; and hence that it respects not individuals, but those classes and communities of men in different parts of the eastern world who were successively converted to the true faith. I have now to illustrate the other position already suggested, namely, that the same election does nowhere im-

port a fixed and certain inheritance in the kingdom of Heaven, but merely a state of peculiar advantages as to means and motives, including divine instruction in this world and the hope of eternal life in the world to come.

To prove this statement it might be enough to transcribe the words of my text ; “ wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” If the election taught by the Apostle Peter had borne any resemblance to the opinions which modern divines have substituted for it, there would have been no room for his exhortation to “ make it sure ;” because an event which is supposed to carry the impress of God’s eternal predestination and decree could not admit of any additional security. But allow, on the other hand, that the election of Christians was, like the election of the Jews, a favoured condition which might be lost through negligence or forfeited by infidelity, and we shall see at once the ground of the holy man’s anxiety and warning. The latter people, St Paul assures us, were deprived of their privileges, and stripped of all the dis-

inction which had attached to them as the Elect of God, because of their unbelief and hardness of heart ; and he does not conceal from the former that a similar fate might befall them if they did not profit by the impressive example with which they were thereby supplied. “ If some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree ; boast not against the branches.—Thou wilt say then, the branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well ; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear : for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.”

This beautiful allegory exhibits a distinct picture and most satisfactory illustration of the Scriptural Doctrine of Election. We perceive in it the rejection of the older people—the elect, the chosen, the redeemed, the sanctified, the inheritance, the vineyard of the Lord—and the substitution of the younger people, who, in virtue

of their new relationship, were to succeed to all the titles just enumerated, and to become the elect, the redeemed, the sanctified. But no security is given for the permanency of these privileges: they were lost once, and they may be lost again: be not high-minded, but fear. In connexion with such views, we can understand clearly the grounds and reasons of St Peter's admonition to his Christian disciples, to make their calling and election sure; and I may add, that it is only in connexion with such views that his entreaty is at all intelligible, or could be productive of the slightest practical effect. Take the word election in its modern and popular sense, and you will necessarily convict the Apostle of incoherence in his reasoning, and of contradiction in his argument. If he had meant by election that mysterious decree which is imagined to have fixed the destiny of every individual man and woman before the foundations of the world were laid, what would have been the use of exhorting the objects of such boundless favour to co-operate with Divine grace in order to secure its final attainment?

Could the feeble aid of man be thought necessary to give effect to the determinations of the Almighty Sovereign of heaven and earth ! Besides, St Peter not only indicates the possibility of forfeiting the happy condition in which the converts of Pontus and Bithynia were placed, but he even specifies the means by which such a catastrophe might be prevented. “ If you do these things, ye shall never fall.” What things ? They are stated in the preceding verses :—“ By the Divine power,” says he, “ are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises ; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he

that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

The meaning and intention of the holy Apostle, in the particular passage of his letter under our consideration, are rendered perfectly manifest by the scope of his address when viewed in its general bearing. He wrote about election as a Jew was accustomed to write and to reason on that interesting subject; as implying, not an unalterable destination of individuals to the enjoyment of eternal happiness, but simply the advancement of a class of believers to a position of peculiar hope and privilege, which, if sedulously and diligently improved, would terminate in the possession of never-ending bliss.

The Apostle John entertained a similar opinion on this great doctrine, and used the word elect in

the same sense in which he would have used the word Christian. Thus, when he called the female to whom he wrote his Second Epistle the "Elect Lady," he meant to express nothing more profound than that she was a member of the Christian Church ; a remark which may be extended to the terms in which he concludes his letter, " the children of thy *elect* sister greet thee." That he did not, by using the phrase now quoted, intend to convey the assurance that her salvation was fixed in the counsels of Heaven, and that she could not possibly fail to attain the end of her hope, is clear from the exhortation which he incorporates into his short address. " Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward ;" intimating his fears lest, by yielding to some one of the many deceivers who were entered into the world, she might fall away from the faith, and disappoint all his expectations.

It must have occurred to the reader, that as the term election was applied originally to the pe-

culiar circumstances of the early Christians, and more especially to their first introduction into the Church, it cannot be used at the present time in its proper signification. The members of Christ, in our days, are no longer chosen from among idolatrous Pagans or unbelieving Jews ; and therefore, in the strict acceptation of the word, we are not an elect people. The same remark is applicable to many other titles and descriptions scattered throughout the Epistles, and which, as they had a special reference to the condition of the primitive converts, do not exactly suit the very altered circumstances, as to history and outward estate, in which we find ourselves placed.

For these reasons the compilers of the English Liturgy assign to the term Elect the same meaning which is usually annexed to the epithet Christian ; and hence, to be a member of the visible body of the Redeemer, and to be one of the elect, are expressions of analogous, or rather of identical import. For example, in the Baptismal Office, the minister prays that the Almighty would be pleased to sanctify the water to the

mystical washing away of sin, and to grant that the infant to be baptized therein may receive the fulness of his grace, and “ever remain in the number of his faithful and *elect* children.” In the Catechism, too, the child is instructed to say, that he believes not only in God the Father who created the world, and in God the Son who hath redeemed all mankind, but also in God the Holy Ghost who sanctifieth him, “and all the *elect* people of God.” In both these instances it is obvious the word Elect is used in the general sense of being a member of the visible Church of Christ, and as denoting that favoured condition as to means and inducements which is not improperly described as a “state of salvation;” but which, whatever may be its advantages here, will be of no avail hereafter, unless the election be made sure by that diligence which St Peter recommended to his numerous converts. When, again, in the Burial Service, we pray that the Almighty would be pleased “to accomplish the number of his Elect and to hasten his kingdom,” we make an allusion to his promise, that, before the end

of the world, all the tribes of the human race shall be converted to the faith of his Son, and that the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. In this case, too, as in all others, it is unquestionable that the word "Elect" means, not the chosen few in the Calvinistic sense of the term, but the universal Church of the Redeemer in the apostolical meaning of the expression ; and the prayer, accordingly, into which the phrase is introduced, is intended to give utterance to the pious wish that the reception of the Gospel may speedily prepare the way for that happy era which is to dawn upon the saints in the latter days, bring on the consummation which is to precede the final doom, and usher in the resurrection of the just and the eternal reunion of all who sleep in the Lord.

The greatest source of error, indeed, among modern divines, is the very common practice of applying, with hardly any modification, to our times and circumstances, that portion of the language of the New Testament which had an exclusive reference to the age and persons respect-

ing which it was originally employed. On this point I am happy to find a most able supporter in the late Dr Paley, whose opinion indeed I have expressed in the foregoing sentence.—“ In opposition to the Jews,” says he, “ who were so much offended with the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles, St Paul maintains with great industry, that it was God Almighty’s intention from the first to substitute, at a fit season into the place of the rejected Israelites, a society of men taken indifferently out of all nations under heaven, and admitted to be the people of God upon easier and more comprehensive terms. This is expressed in the Epistle to the Ephesians as follows:—

‘ Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself; that, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ.’—The scheme of collecting such a society was what God foreknew before the foundation of the world; was what he had predestinate; was the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus; and, by conse-

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quence, this society in their collective capacity were the objects of this foreknowledge, predestination, and purpose; that is, in the language of the Apostles, they were they 'whom he did foreknow,' they 'whom he did predestinate,' they 'whom he did choose in Christ before the foundation of the world,' they who were 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.'

This doctrine has nothing in it harsh or obscure. But what have we made of it? The rejection of the Jews and the adopting another community into their place, composed, while it was carrying on, an object of great magnitude in the attention of the inspired writers who understood and observed it. This event, which engaged so much the thoughts of the Apostle, is now only read of, and hardly that—the reality and importance of it are little known or attended to. Losing sight, therefore, of the proper occasion of these expressions, yet willing, after our fashion, to adapt them to ourselves, and finding nothing else in our circumstances that suited with them, we have learned at length to apply them to the final des-

tiny of individuals at the day of judgment ; and upon this foundation has been erected a doctrine which lays the axe at once to the root of all religion—that of an absolute appointment to salvation or perdition independent of ourselves or anything we can do. And what is extraordinary, those very arguments and expressions (Romans, chapters ix. x. xi.) which the Apostle employed to vindicate the impartial mercies of God against the narrow and excluding claims of Jewish prejudice, have been interpreted to establish a dispensation the most arbitrary and partial that could be devised.”*

It would lead me too far away from the object immediately in view, were I to trace through the history of the Church the successive steps by which the plain doctrine of the Apostles arrived at the corrupted form in which it appears in certain creeds at the present day. Suffice it to repeat, that the election spoken of by these holy men gives no countenance to the tenet which

* Sermons and Tracts, pp. 54, 55.

bears the same name in the school of Geneva. St Paul knew of no Christian institute which assigns eternal life to one section of the human race, and eternal death to all the rest, in virtue of a secret decree supposed to have been passed in heaven before the Almighty had breathed into the dust of the earth a living soul. In his own case, he assumes no such certainty in regard to happiness in the future world. On the contrary, he declared that he found it necessary to exert all the vigour of his mind, enlightened and strengthened as it was by the Spirit of God, in the performance of duty and in the regulation of his desires, lest, while he had preached to others, he himself should be a castaway. Under the same impression, he informs his disciple Timothy, that he “endured all things for the Elect’s sake.” And why? “that,” says he, “they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” He submitted to his sufferings and labours with the view of promoting and securing the final welfare of the Elect; and hence we may conclude, that he did not consider their

salvation as certain, but as depending in some measure upon the success of his exertions. This resolution on his part was perfectly consistent with the ancient belief, that the Elect were merely members of the Christian Church, and who might or might not be ultimately saved ; but cannot be reconciled with the more modern idea, that the Elect constitute a particular body, all of whom are infallibly destined to salvation.

That the doctrine of election enforced by St Paul was such as I have described it, might be confidently inferred even from the historical instance which he adduces, in order to illustrate his views respecting that tenet. He tells us that Jacob was elected, and Esau refused or passed by : and this without any reference to their characters or conduct. It was said unto Rebecca,—“ The elder shall serve the younger ; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” And, as the children were not yet born, this was done that “ the purpose of God, according to *election*, might stand, not of works, but of him that willeth.” From

this statement, connected with the actual fortunes of the two young men, it is manifest beyond all contradiction, that the election here alluded to had no respect to their *personal* interests, either in this world or the next. In point of fact, Esau never served Jacob. On the contrary, so far as we can judge from the brief details with which we are supplied in the Book of Genesis, the elder brother was much the richer and more powerful of the two, and, at the same time, by far the more amiable and generous. The choice, therefore, of which the favourite son of Rebecca was the object, pointed solely to the distinction of being the father of the Israelites, the peculiar people ; while the servitude denounced against Esau was not imposed till several centuries afterwards, when David subdued the Edomites, the progeny of that patriarch, and subjected them to tribute. In short, the election here, as in all other cases, was general and not particular, applying to large bodies of men, and not to individuals ; and the intention of it was not to secure to any class of hu-

man beings the enjoyment of eternal happiness, but merely to accomplish a great design of Providence for the benefit of the world at large.

From these facts, and, indeed, from the whole tenor of the Epistle to the Romans, the nature of the election preached by St Paul appears not only perfectly intelligible, but presents nothing either to the reason or to the imagination which can give offence to the natural feeling of justice in the human heart. We see in it only the choice of a nation or people to enjoy certain advantages in point of knowledge and the means of improvement, which were denied for the time to many other tribes. The Hebrews were the first upon whom this distinction was conferred, and they continued during some ages the Elect of God, the chosen inheritance of Jehovah. When they were cast off, a similar election took place, which comprehended Gentiles, as well as the descendants of Abraham ; upon which these latter classes, being converted to the true faith, became in their turn the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the peculiar people. It is accordingly

found, that, as *all the Jews* were denominated the elect, the chosen, the called, so were *all the Christians* described in the same terms. The election of the one corresponded completely to the election of the other : in both instances it implied the means of grace and the hope of glory ; but in neither case did it convey a fixed and unchangeable destination to the bliss of heaven, as the necessary result of the previous act of favour.

Upon examining the features of this doctrine, which certainly exhibits nothing either harsh or obscure, we may repeat the words of Dr Paley, and ask,—“ *But what have we made of it?*” I shall answer this question by transcribing a few passages from the works of the greatest modern authority on this subject, the celebrated Calvin himself.—“ *Predestination,*” says he, “ we call the eternal decree of God, by which he has determined with himself what he willed to be done concerning every man. For all men are not created in an equal condition ; but eternal life is pre-ordained to some, eternal damnation to others. Therefore, as every individual was formed for the one or the other end,

so we say that he was predestinated either to life or to death.”—“ Although it is now sufficiently clear that God, by a secret counsel, freely elects whom he wills, others being rejected, yet his gratuitous election is at present only half-explained, till we come to individuals to whom God not only offers salvation, but *so assigns it* that the *certainty* of the effect is not doubtful. That, therefore, which the Scripture clearly shows, we affirm, that God, by an eternal inscrutable counsel, once appointed those whom he should hereafter will to take into salvation ; those, moreover, whom he should will to devote to destruction. We assert, that this counsel, with respect to the elect, was founded in his gratuitous mercy, without any regard to human worth ; but that the approach to life is precluded to those whom, by his just but incomprehensible judgment, he assigns to damnation.”*—“ If we cannot assign a reason why God thinks his own worthy of mercy, except because it so pleases him, neither shall we have any other

* Institut. lib. iii. cap. 21.

ground for his reprobating all others, except that it is his will. Many, indeed, as if they wished to repel odium from God, acknowledge election in such a way as to deny that any one is reprobated; but this is an ignorant and childish distinction, since election itself would not stand unless opposed to reprobation. Since the disposition of all things is in the hand of God; since the power of salvation and of death resides in him; so he ordains by his counsel and his will that some among men should be born, devoted to certain death from the womb, to glorify his name by their destruction.”—“Nor ought what I say to appear absurd, when I maintain, that God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in it the ruin of his posterity, but that it was brought to pass by the determination of his will.”*

“The reprobate want to be considered as excusable in sinning, because it is impossible for them to avoid it, especially since a necessity of sinning is imposed upon them by the ordinance of

* Institut. lib. iii. cap. 23.

God. But we say there is no reason for their being excused on this ground, since the ordinance of God, by which they complain that they are destined to destruction, has its own equity, unknown, indeed, to us, but most certain.”—“As, by the efficacy of his calling towards the elect, the Almighty perfects the salvation to which he had destined them by his eternal decree; so he has his judgments against the reprobate, by which he may execute his counsel concerning them. Those, therefore, whom he created for the reproach of life and the destruction of death, in order that they may come to their end and be organs of his wrath and examples of his severity, he deprives at one time of the power of hearing his word, and at other times makes them more blind and stupid by the preaching of it. Behold he directs his voice to them, but it is that they may become more deaf; he lights up a light, but it is that they may be made more blind; he propounds a doctrine, but it is that they become more stupid by it; he applies a remedy, but it is that they may not be healed!—Nor can this fact

be controverted, that God delivers his doctrines involved in obscurities to those whom he wishes not to be illuminated, that they may gain nothing from it, except the being delivered up to greater insensibility. That the reprobates do not obey the will of God when explained to them, will be rightly imputed to the wickedness and maliciousness of their own hearts, provided it be understood that they are addicted to this wickedness, because they have been raised up by the just but inscrutable judgment of God to illustrate his glory by their damnation !”

“ It is established, therefore, that the whole strength of our election is shut up in the sole purpose of God ; that merits here are of no avail, which can have no effect but to death ; that worthiness, of which there is none, is not regarded ; but that the loving-kindness of God alone reigns. Therefore, it is a false dogma, and contrary to the word of God, that the Almighty either chooses or reprobates, according as he perceives that individuals shall be worthy or unworthy of his grace. Understand simply, that it

does not depend upon our will, or upon our endeavour, that we should be reckoned among the elect: but that the whole of this is of Divine goodness, which, of its own accord, takes those who neither will, nor endeavour, nor even think of it. Let us, therefore, conclude, that the salvation of those whom it pleases God to save is to be so ascribed to the mercy of God that nothing may remain for the industry of man.”*

“ St Paul wishes to impress upon us, that, in the difference which appears between the elect and the reprobate, our minds should be content that it has seemed good to God to illuminate some men to salvation, and to blind others to death, and not to inquire after any cause beyond his pleasure. For we ought to rest upon these expressions,—‘ on whom he will,’—and ‘ whom he will ;’ farther than which he does not wish us to proceed. But the word ‘ hardening,’ when it is attributed to God in the Scriptures, does not signify barely a permission,—as some weak guides would have

* Comment. on Rom. ix. 16.

it,—but the action also of Divine wrath ; for all external things which tend to the blinding of the reprobate are instruments of his anger. Even Satan himself, who acts efficaciously within, is so far his minister, that he does not act but by his command.” Hence he concludes, on the apparent authority of Scripture, that “ the destruction of the ungodly was not only foreseen by God, but that it was ordained by his counsel and will, —not only that it was foreknown, but that the wicked were purposely created that they might perish. God prepares the elect for glory, while the reprobate are vessels prepared for destruction, —there is no doubt that both preparations depend upon the secret counsel of God,—the reprobate are assigned to their lot before they are born.”*

“ The Lord, by adopting us, does not regard what sort of persons we are, nor is he reconciled to us from any personal worth on our part, but the sole cause with him is the eternal good pleasure of his will, by which he has predestinated us. God re-

* Comment. in Rom. ix. 23.

gards nothing exterior to himself, by which he might be induced to elect us ; since the decree of his own will is with him the sole cause of his electing.”*—“ It was given us from heaven that we should believe in Christ ; because, before the origin of the world, we were ordained to faith, as well as elected to the inheritance of eternal life.”—“ You are greatly deceived if you think that the eternal counsels of God can be so separated that he elected some men to salvation, and devoted no one to destruction. For, if he elected *some*, it certainly follows that all are not elected. Moreover, what shall be said of these latter, except that they are left to themselves to perish ? As far as regards the reprobate, the beginning of their ruin and damnation arises from the fact that they are abandoned by God.”†

From these quotations, which might have been increased to a much greater extent, it is manifest that this celebrated Reformer meant to teach, on the one hand, the doctrine of personal election to

* Comment. in Ephes. i. 11. † Comment. on Rom. xi. 7.

the enjoyment of everlasting happiness in heaven, and, on the other hand, the corresponding tenet of reprobation, or the positive assignment of a large majority of the human race to eternal suffering and despair in the bottomless pit. Nor have the opinions of Calvin been confined to his own age,—a period which, although remarkable for zeal and ability, was too near the dark era of the Church to be entitled to much respect on account of biblical research or sound criticism. Divines had not yet fallen upon that more certain method of discovering the truth, which proceeds by comparing Scripture with Scripture; nor learned to interpret the language of the Apostles by a reference to the doctrines and usages of the Jews, in whose school they had all acquired, more or less, the rudiments of their theology.

It was not till the days of Mr Locke that the apostolical writings were studied on right principles, and in connexion with the literature and antiquities of the more ancient Church,—the first elect people of God. It was then fully ascertained that St Paul wrote respecting Christianity in

the language which had been employed by the Rabbis relative to the Mosaical institution ; and hence, that, in order to understand his phraseology and his reasoning, it was previously necessary to determine the import of the several terms in which the privileges of the Jewish economy were expressed, and of the conditions upon which they were held.

The great philosopher just named supplied a key to the entire comprehension of the Pauline Epistles, by remarking that one of their main objects was to impress upon those to whom they were addressed, “ that it was the purpose of God from the beginning to take the Gentiles to be his people under the Messias, in place of the Jews, who had been so till that time, but were then nationally rejected, because they nationally rejected the Messias whom he sent to them to be their King and Deliverer, but was received by a very small number of them, which remnant was received into the kingdom of Christ, and so continued to be his people with the converted Gentiles, who altogether made now the church and people of God.” Having assumed this ground, the pro-

cess of exposition and commentary became easy, natural, and satisfactory. He remarked, that “ ‘ called of God,’—‘ called to be Saints,’—‘ beloved of God,’—are but different expressions for professors of Christianity.” The Greek word which we translate “ Saints,” is, says he, rightly translated ; “ yet it does not mean any other than a national sanctification, such as the Jews had by being separated from the Gentiles, and appropriated to God as his peculiar people, not that every one who was of the holy nation of the Jews heretofore, or of the holy Church of Christ under the Gospel, were Saints, in that sense in which the word is now usually taken among Christians, namely, such persons as were every one of them actually in a state of salvation.”—“ It is plain,” he observes in another place, “ that the salvation that St Paul, in this discourse concerning the nation of the Jews and the Gentile world in gross, speaks of, is not eternal happiness in heaven, but he means by it the profession of the true religion here on earth. Whether it be that it is as far as corporations or bodies politic can go towards the

attainment of eternal salvation, I will not inquire. But this is evident, that *being saved* is used by the Apostle here in this sense. That all the Jewish nation may become the people of God again by taking up the Christian profession may be easily conceived. But that every person of such a Christian nation shall attain eternal salvation in heaven, I think nobody can imagine to be here intended.”—“It may be observed,” he elsewhere states, “that St Paul’s discourse, being of the national privilege of continuing the people of God, he speaks all along of the Jews in the collective term *Israel*. And so, likewise, the *Remnant* who were to remain his people, and incorporate with the converted Gentiles into one body of Christians, owning the dominion of the one true God, he calls the *Election*. This *Remnant*, or *Election*, call it by what name you please, were those who sought righteousness by faith in Christ, and not by the deeds of the Law, and so became the people of God, that people which he had chosen to be his.” In his note on the words “sanctified in Christ Jesus,”

he reminds us, that by such persons the Apostle does not mean those “ whose lives are pure and holy, for there were many amongst those he wrote to who were quite otherwise ; but *sanctified* signifies separated from the common state of mankind to be the people of God, and to serve him. The heathen world had revolted from the true God to the service of idols and false gods ; the Jews being separated from this corrupted mass to be the peculiar people of God were called *holy* : they being cast off, the professors of Christianity were separated to be the people of God, and so became holy.”*

The views of Mr Locke have been adopted by

* “ The Jews called all that were Jews *holy* ; and all others they called *unclean*. Thus *proles genita extra sanctitatem*, was a child begot by parents while they were yet heathens ; *genita intra sanctitatem*, was a child begot by parents after they were proselytes. This way of speaking St Paul transfers from the Jewish into the Christian Church, calling all that are of the Christian Church *Saints*, or *Holy*, by which reason, all that were not of it were unclean. The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband ; else were your children unclean, but now they are holy.”—1 Corinth. vii. 14.

several distinguished writers, and are at the present day generally received among the more temperate and learned theologians of all persuasions. But, as I have already observed, the notions of Calvin have, in like manner, found supporters in different sections of the Reformed Church; and, even in these enlightened times, there are some divines, who, although they possess not nerve sufficient to maintain his conclusions in all points, are nevertheless disposed to use his language in reference to election and reprobation. The works of President Edwards will perhaps be regarded by all parties as exhibiting the fullest and least perverted exposition of the doctrine entertained by the modern Calvinists on this head; and I have recourse to them the more readily for such a purpose, because he was not a member of any of those religious bodies whose creeds have obtained a public sanction, and thereby bind the consciences of a large class of professional men.

This author, then, admits that God has *two* wills,—a secret and a declared one, and thus the Almighty may “*decree one thing and command*

another." For example, he decrees the damnation of a man and all the sin which leads to that horrible fate; and yet he commands the man to abstain from sin, to practise virtue, and seek holiness. "When a distinction is made between God's revealed will and his secret will, or his will of command and decree, *will* is certainly in that distinction taken in two senses. His will of decree is not his will in the same sense that his will of command is. Therefore, it is no difficulty at all to suppose that the one may be otherwise than the other.—And thus it must needs be; and no hypothesis whatever will relieve a man, but that he must own these two wills of God."*

The mind of a plain man will not, it is obvious, be reconciled to a system of faith by the assurance, that the Creator of heaven and earth commands one thing when he has determined on another; and that, in regard to the destiny of the human race, his words and his intentions are at variance. "God," says the same writer, "decrees all the

* Miscellaneous Remarks concerning the Divine Decrees, p. 365.

good that ever comes to pass ; and therefore there certainly will come to pass no more good than he has absolutely decreed to cause ; and there certainly and infallibly will no more believe, no more be godly, and no more be saved, than God has decreed that he will cause to believe, and cause to be godly, and will save. If God from all eternity knew that such and such things were future, then they were future ; and consequently the proposition was from all eternity true, that such a thing at such a time would be." He illustrates his view of the Divine government by the following supposition :—" If a prince were of perfect and all-comprehensive wisdom and foresight, and he should see that an act of treason would be for the great advancement of the welfare of his kingdom, it might be wise and virtuous in him to permit that such act of treason should come to pass ; yea, it would be foolish and wrong if he did not. It would be prudent and wise in him not to restrain the traitor, but to let him alone to go on in the way he chose. And yet he might hate the treason at the same time,

and he might properly also give forth laws at the same time forbidding it upon pain of death, and might hold these laws in force against this traitor.”*

To render the parallel complete between the scheme of Providence imagined by Mr Edwards and the administration of the hypothetical prince of “all-comprehensive wisdom and foresight,” it is only necessary to suppose that the latter had the power of fixing the traitor in his resolution of committing the crime, or rather of creating him on purpose that he might commit it. Then comes the enactment of a law against treason, forbidding it on pain of death ; and, next, the holding in force that law against this very traitor who was doomed to break it ; and, finally, the capital punishment of the same criminal for yielding to his fixed and inevitable destiny. The determination that the unhappy man should be guilty of treason and die for it, corresponds to the *secret* will of God ; the law against treason, forbidding every one to commit it, and threatening a condign punish-

* Remarks, &c. p. 386.

ment, corresponds to the *declared* will of God ; and the execution of the sentence upon the miserable victim of the prince's " wisdom and foresight," corresponds to the eternal torment of the reprobate in hell-fire ! This in some degree answers the question of Dr Paley, "*What have we made of it ?*"

But the learned President goes on :—" It is necessary that God's awful majesty, his authority and dreadful greatness, justice, and holiness, should be manifested. But this could not be unless punishment had been decreed ; so that the shining forth of God's glory would be very imperfect, both because these parts of Divine glory would not shine forth as the others do, and also the glory of his goodness, love, and holiness would be faint without them.—We little consider how much the sense of good is heightened by the sense of evil ; both moral and natural. And as it is necessary that there should be evil, because the display of the glory of God could not but be imperfect and incomplete without it, so evil is necessary in order to the highest happiness of the creature and the completeness of that communi-

cation of God for which he made the world. How much happiness soever he bestowed, his goodness would not be so much prized and admired, and the sense of it not so great.”*

The sentiment now expressed betrays great want of benevolence in the scheme with which it is connected, as implying that there could be no heaven without hell, no happiness without the contemplation of misery, no honour to the Divine Mercy without a corresponding glory obtained for “Vindictive justice.” It must not be omitted, however, that on one occasion a feeling of reverence for the attributes of the Almighty carries this learned Calvinist into a glaring inconsistency. He assures his readers, for example, in the earlier portion of his remarks, that there is not “one of the decrees of God before another in the order of time, for all are from eternity;” whereas, at a more advanced stage of the discussion, he maintains that “nothing in the decree of reprobation is to be looked upon as antecedent to

* Miscellaneous Remarks, p. 359.

man's being and fall." "God's decree of the eternal damnation of the reprobate is not to be conceived of as prior to the fall, yea, and to the very being of the persons, as the decree of the eternal glory of the Elect is." If this sentence has any meaning at all, it must be intended to express the belief of its author that the decree of the fall must have preceded, *in the conception* of Deity, the decree of eternal damnation; for as, according to his view, the decree of Election was from all eternity; and, as Election necessarily involves the idea of that condition of wretchedness and despair from which the chosen were rescued, it follows, that the decree of reprobation or of *non-election* must have been contemporaneous. The decree to elect some and pass by the rest must have originated in the same state of things; for the one act or determination necessarily implies the other.—Of decrees in general the acute metaphysician writes as follows:—

“When God decrees to give the blessing of rain, he decrees the prayers of his people; and when he decrees the prayers of his people for

rain, he very commonly decrees rain ; and thereby there is a harmony between these two decrees of rain and the prayers of God's people. Thus, also, when he decrees diligence and industry, he decrees riches and prosperity ; when he decrees prudence, he often decrees success ; when he decrees striving, then he often decrees the obtaining the kingdom of heaven ; when he decrees the preaching of the Gospel, then he decrees the bringing home of souls to Christ ; when he decrees good natural faculties, diligence, and good advantages, then he decrees learning ; when he decrees summer, then he decrees the growing plants ; when he decrees conformity to his Son, then he decrees calling ; when he decrees calling, then he decrees justification ; and when he decrees justification, then he decrees everlasting glory. Thus all the decrees of God are harmonious ; and this is all that can be said for or against absolute or conditional decrees.*

* When a divine has obtained a character for being orthodox he may write what he pleases with perfect impunity. Had the following remarks on the " Election of Christ" proceeded

In a word, it is the doctrine of Mr Edwards, that the number and persons of the Elect were

from a person of less reputation, they would certainly have been regarded as savouring of a very dangerous heresy :—“ Christ is the chosen of God both as to his divine and human nature. His election, as it respects his divine nature, was for his worthiness, and excellency, and infinite amiableness in the sight of God ; and his worthiness was the ground of his election. But his election, as respects his human nature, was free and sovereign, not being for any worthiness ; but his election was the foundation of his worthiness. God had determined to exalt one of his creatures so high that he should be one person with God, and should have communion with God, and should have glory in all respects answerable ; and so should be the head of all other Elect creatures. And his sovereignty appears in the election of the man Jesus various ways.—It was owing to this election of God that the man Jesus was not one of the corrupt race of mankind ; so that his freedom from sin is owing to the free, sovereign, electing love of God in him as well as in the rest of Elect men. All holiness, all obedience, and good works, and perseverance in him was owing to the electing love of God as well as in his Elect members. For if he had failed ; if his courage, resolution, and love had been conquered by his sufferings, he never could have been delivered from them ; for then he would have failed in his obedience to God ; and his love to God failing, and being overcome by sufferings, those sufferings would have failed of the nature of an acceptable sacrifice to God ; and the infinite value of his sufferings would have failed, and so must be made up in infinite duration to atone for his own deficiency. But God having chosen Christ, he could

fixed from all eternity ; and that the Almighty having decreed the *end* has likewise decreed the *means*, so that it is not possible either that any of the favoured individuals should perish, or that any others should be saved. It is not my object to dispute the grounds of this doctrine, either as it may be supposed to betray inconsistency respecting the attributes of the Deity, or to reflect upon those qualities of the Divine nature in which mankind are invited to put their trust. My undertaking extends no farther than to prove that such a tenet is not set forth in the Bible, and was at no time held by any of the inspired writers. The Election and Predestination of which they spoke had no reference to individuals nor to the certain enjoyment of eternal life ; the choice of which the Jews and first Christians were the ob-

not fail in this work, and so was delivered from his sufferings, from the eternity of them, by the electing love of God. Justification and glorification were fruits of God's foreknowledge and predestination in him as well as in his Elect members. So Christ's election is the foundation of ours, as much as his justification and glorification are the foundation of ours."

ject being limited, in its primary intention at least, to a condition of higher knowledge and advantages than belonged to the world at large, and which might or might not terminate in their everlasting salvation. There is not in the New Testament a single instance in which the certain possession of happiness in heaven is connected with the simple fact of Election. On the contrary, this privilege is everywhere represented as an inducement to watchfulness and perseverance ; as a motive to gratitude indeed, and a foundation of hope ; but nowhere as the basis of an assurance which could not be disappointed.

The reader will find, accordingly, that, if he study the Bible with a reference to the views just stated, he will encounter no difficulty in reconciling the election and predestination there recorded with the exhortations to vigilance and activity which usually follow the announcement of these doctrines. He will understand what is meant by making this calling and election sure ; and on what grounds St Paul should have entreated the very persons whose election he declares, to watch

and be sober, to pray without ceasing, to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good ; and why he should conclude his admonition by lifting up his voice to God that they might be “ preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He will perceive the reason why the Christian Elect should have been exhorted to work out their salvation with fear and trembling ; and, above all, why they were counselled not to be high-minded, but to give way to a salutary apprehension lest the same impartial judgment which cast out the original Elect should inflict the same punishment upon them. In short, by adopting the scheme of interpretation recommended by Mr Locke, we shall free our system of faith from much obscurity and apparent contradiction ; the harmony between doctrine and precept will be restored ; and the Divine decrees will present themselves in such a light as not to preclude the probation and responsibility of man.

It cannot indeed be asserted that any hypothesis will enable us to escape altogether from the darkness which obscures the great and perplexing ques-

tion which respects the origin of evil, as well as the suffering and doubt which beset the present condition of human nature. But on such subjects we take refuge from our anxiety in the consideration that they are not understood, simply because they are too high for us ; and, moreover, that, as Revelation has been silent, we may presume that neither our duty nor our destiny is connected with the knowledge which is thus studiously withheld. We derive a species of consolation from the very difficulty which sets our intellect at defiance ; and are pleased to find ourselves in the cloud which conceals the great majesty and glory of the Divine Counsels from our view. The dim light which is thrown upon God's purposes as to the eternal state of man is a relief to our feeble vision. We feel it is good for us that we see but through a glass darkly. It is therefore not the smallest of the objections which might be urged against the modern notions of election and reprobation, that they remove a veil which has been graciously interposed by the hand of Providence between our present imperfect existence and his ultimate de-

signs concerning us. There is something extremely repulsive in the horrid distinctness with which the eternal fate of man is revealed in the writings of Calvin. He seizes with presumptuous hand the keys of hell and of death ; and almost counts before our eyes the “ten thousand times ten thousand and the thousands of thousands” who, from all eternity, were consigned to the flames of everlasting torment. He delineates the spectre with so much vividness, and unfolds the worm which will never die in so frightful a shape, that he at length becomes terrified with his own representations ; exclaiming, “it is indeed a horrible decree !” But, deriving new courage from his system, and, confident in the soundness of his conclusions, he adds, “no one, however, can deny that God knew what would be the end of man before he made him ; and that he knew, precisely because he had so fixed it by his own decree.”*

* **DECRETUM** quidem **HORRIBILE**, fateor ; inficiari tamen nemo poterit quin praesciverit **Deus** quem exitum habiturus esset homo antequam ipsum conderet, et ideo praesciverit quia

It has been insinuated by some of those who direct their faith by the Genevan institutes, that, as all men are not to be saved, it must make little difference as to our impressions respecting the benevolence of the Deity, whether we say that the wicked perish by a positive decree of Heaven, or are merely allowed to perish owing to the absence of such help as was necessary to keep them in the path of salvation. To this remark it may be sufficient to reply, that our knowledge of Divine things is much too limited to justify any positive conclusions relative to the influence of the Holy Spirit, and of religious motives, on the souls of men; and, therefore, we cannot determine in

decreto suo sic ordinârat.—Nec absurdum videri debet quod dico, Deum non modo primi hominis casum, et in eo posterorum ruinam previdisse; sed arbitrio quoque suo dispensasse.

“Is it not wonderful,” said the late Bishop of Winchester, “that any one should ascribe to the God of all mercy a decree which he himself confesses to be *horrible*? And yet it must be acknowledged that Calvin was a man of piety, and of considerable talent and attainment. To what absurdities and inconsistencies will not the human mind be carried by a blind attachment to system!”

what degree the final destiny of the human being depends upon the powers of deliberation and choice with which he is endowed, and how far it is affected by the inscrutable designs of Providence. In this state of ignorance, we refrain from dogmatizing affirmatively; thinking it enough, from an examination of Scripture, to satisfy ourselves that the doctrine of Election, in the Calvinistic sense of the word, is not taught there, and that the inspired servants of the Redeemer do not, in their several writings, mention any such decree as will finally close the portals of heaven against a penitent sinner. On this main point we fortify ourselves with a negative; readily admitting, at the same time, that there are difficulties arising from every view which can be taken of the present condition of mankind, not only insurmountable by the strongest intellect, but avowedly placed beyond the limits of human investigation. We, therefore, do not presume to bring forward our discoveries in opposition to those of Calvin: we merely maintain that he has carried his imaginary discoveries too far; that he

has mistaken the meaning of Scriptural language ; that he has intruded into a province forbidden to theological disquisition ; and that he has thereby heaped upon the Divine Counsels a multitude of imputations, which he would not have dared to ascribe to the least perfect of his brethren upon earth.

I have observed that some writers of the same school have endeavoured to support their views of Election by a reference to the analogy of Nature and the course of Providence. They insist, that the principle which guided the Almighty in selecting a few of the human race for heaven, is exemplified in the choice which is made of a corresponding minority, to enjoy, during this life, the blessings of high rank, great riches, splendid talents, and robust health. Of this sort of election it may be justly remarked, that, like the nomination of the ancient Hebrews to be the people of God, it takes place more for the sake of others than of those who are made the objects of it. Rank, wealth, and genius, so far from affording a larger share of happiness to those who are pos-

sessed of them, prove, not unfrequently, the cause of deep anxiety and trouble ; harassing the soul with cares which are unknown to the more humble man, and creating a sensibility to mental pain more to be dreaded than hunger, thirst, and the most unremitting toil. The hand of Providence deals out in very equal measure the enjoyments of this life ; or, if there be anywhere a more abundant attainment of earthly comfort than is granted to the mass of our fellow-creatures, it must not be sought for in the high places of society,—among those who occupy the prominent positions of the world, or are supplied the most liberally with its treasures. Whatever original inequalities, too, there may be among the sons of men, their effect as to comparative felicity is soon destroyed by the hand of that omnipotent leveller Custom, which, in a little time, raises the valleys, and lowers the mountains, till the surface of society becomes a dead and equal plain. The beggar, whose next meal depends upon the caprice of a rich glutton, or upon the humanity of some one almost as poor as himself, and who knows not the roof which is

to cover his head during the ensuing night, enjoys, perhaps, a larger portion of animal pleasure than the proudest noble, amidst all the appliances of his elevated station. Let it not be said, then, that the apparent distinctions of this life afford any support to a doctrine, which assigns to a small section of the great human family the unspeakable bliss of heaven throughout all eternity, and shuts up the rest in a hopeless prison-house, where they shall be “tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

It is remarked by Dr Paley, in the passage already quoted, that, by applying to the final destiny of individuals at the day of judgment, expressions which were originally used in reference to the election of the Gentiles to the privileges of the Gospel, “we have laid the axe to the root of all religion.” The doctrine of an absolute appointment to salvation or perdition, independent of ourselves or anything we can do, would unquestionably have the effect now stated, were it not that the strong feelings of common sense and of natural justice counteract the most absurd te-

nets of speculative theology. It is fortunate for mankind, that, in proportion as religious and philosophical opinions deviate from the ordinary standard of human judgment, they have the less influence on the conduct of those who profess to hold them. For example, in the days when the old scepticism prevailed as to the existence of a material world, and when learned men were wont to teach that all the objects of sight and of touch were mere ideas in the mind of him who opened his eyes or put forth his hand, it was nevertheless observed that metaphysicians lived and acted precisely like other persons. So is it with respect to the doctrine of Election. In the characters of those who have been taught to honour it as a Scriptural truth, we detect nothing more objectionable than a certain venial inconsistency, which proves, perhaps, that their hearts have been better trained than their heads, or that, like the early Christians, they have been able to drink a deadly thing without being hurt by it.

These observations, however, apply exclusively to the quiet and orderly course of the religious

world, and to the sane condition of the believer's mind; for when by any accident an unusual degree of excitement takes place in the one or in the other, this extravagant hypothesis, as to individual election, begins to operate with its wonted force; the poison concealed in the blood resumes its power; and the worst consequences may be justly apprehended. We are told in a work lately published, that, among the Reformers who were thrown into prison by Mary, queen of England, there were some bigoted Calvinists, who made themselves very disagreeable to their fellow-sufferers. One of these last, a man of great Christian charity and meekness, says of those disciples of Geneva, that "they did give such occasion of evil and offence to the weak by their using of gaming, that we could do no less but gently admonish them to leave it; and exhort them, after the Scripture, to redeem the time, seeing the days are evil, and to leave such vain things, and to mourn with us that did mourn for the great misery that is fallen on this land, and for the lamentable perplexity that many of our weak breth-

ren, that were not able to bear the cross, were in, and to watch and pray continually to God to strengthen us and our brethren in his truth to stand, that our lives and deaths might glorify his holy name ;—with the which they were not content, but defended it by the Scriptures, and because we would not give them place, but disproved them by the Word, they were somewhat displeased at us ; insomuch, that in process of time they began to pick out matter against us, and, because we did use abstinence and prayer, they reported us to be justifiers of ourselves and such like ; to which we answered, that our justification came by Christ's death and bloodshedding. After other talk, in conclusion they affirmed, that none of them that God ordained to be saved could be driven from him by persecution, nor yet by any other occasion or means. For all such as shall be saved, say they, were elect and predestinate thereunto before the foundation of the world was laid, and none of them can be damned, do what wickedness they can."

The same pious man goes on to point out the

“ various enormities,” as he calls them, which spring from that doctrine ; and, among others, “ it giveth an occasion to neglect prayer, and to leave it altogether, except it be for corporal food, raiment, health of body, and such like, and nothing for the soul, in that it affirmeth, contrary to the Scriptures, that all such as were predestinate before the foundation of the world was laid must of necessity be saved, therefore they need not pray for it ; and the residue must of necessity be damned, and prayer will not help them.”*

In such conduct, so warmly condemned by the holy martyr, there was at least a thorough consistency. The Calvinists of those days acted firmly upon the principles which they held ; trusting to the efficacy of their election, should it have been their good fortune to have had that act of favour conferred upon them ; or prepared to meet the dreadful alternative with composure, should

* See Laurence's Bampton Lectures, Authentic Documents, and Martyr's Letters.

it prove God's pleasure to have excluded them from his mercy. There is the same harmony between faith and practice in the modern Mahometans, who, it is well known, are all avowed predestinarians. They walk into a house where the plague is raging, with the utmost confidence in the ordination of God ; satisfied that, if it is decreed they are to die of that disease, they cannot possibly escape it ; and that, if it is not so decreed, they incur no hazard of infection. Such is the genuine and consistent conduct of a predestinarian ; of one who believes in his heart what he professes with his mouth ; and hence it is manifest, that, in proportion as the doctrine is sincerely believed, a man must become dangerous and mischievous, not only to himself, but to all who have an interest in his behaviour. It is obvious, therefore, that if an article of faith be found harmless only where it is not heartily believed and sincerely acted upon, it cannot be a sound faith ; and a little reflection will bring every one to admit that personal election to eternal life is assuredly a te-

net of that questionable order, and ought not therefore to have been so hastily received as a part of the Christian religion.

I have said that, in the ordinary state of society and of the human mind, there is little danger to be feared from such doctrines; because the absurdity of them, and their utter variance with the unsophisticated sentiments of the heart, form a bar against their practical influence. But it happens, ever and anon, that the frame of religious society as well as the principles of common sense are shaken to their basis by sudden gusts of opinion, of which on some occasions it may be truly said, we know not whence they come nor whither they go. At such times the most extravagant notions meet with the warmest reception; and, accordingly, the doctrines which depart farthest from reason and Scripture are applauded as the very essence of the Gospel, and almost as the dictates of inspiration itself. The tenet of personal election and reprobation in particular seldom fails, in the moment of excitement, to lay hold of that nervous susceptibility which is so apt to confound

the limits of piety and enthusiasm, and to convert internal impressions into articles of religious belief.

It may be presumed, that every man who sincerely holds the doctrine of personal election will regard himself either as one of the chosen or as one of the reprobate; and in both cases the effect on his character cannot fail to be bad. If he view his lot as being cast among those whom the Almighty has predestinated to eternal destruction, he must at once be extremely miserable himself, and the cause of misery to all around him. His days will be passed in sullen gloom, and his nights in the most frightful visions of future horror and suffering. If his thoughts rise towards heaven, it is to imagine a happiness unspeakable of which he is doomed never to partake; there is a decree registered by the finger of God which has shut eternally against him the gate of life and of Divine mercy. If he think of hell, behold, his own place is prepared; the worm that never dies is waiting his approach; and the fire which will never be quenched is already kindled

to receive him. He feels himself rejected, forsaken, and accursed. The grace of God never lights upon his head,—the blessing of Heaven is never shed down upon his soul,—his heart is withered within him by the blasting of the Divine displeasure,—no good angel walks around him to guard his steps and to save him from evil,—no gracious spirit from before God brings a message of peace to his troubled conscience,—no promise sounds in his ears, and no prospect opens to his eye to bear up his wounded mind against the frightful destiny to which he feels that he was born. Every sun that rises brings him one stage nearer to eternal misery, and every evening that closes around him forms another step towards that dreadful night of horror which will never have a morning, and in which his devoted soul must drink the cup of Divine fury, and sustain all the weight of Almighty wrath. Like a man sentenced to the torture, to have his bones crushed and his sinews torn asunder, he looks forward to that more acute agony which he cannot long escape, and to the rack on which he is to be

stretched to all eternity ; and, believing that no mercy will be extended to him, and no mitigation will be granted, he almost wishes that the dreadful hour were come that he might know the worst which is to befall him, and the full amount of that bitter agony at the thoughts of which his heart has so frequently sickened and his imagination been so painfully distracted. Can any one be surprised that such a state of mind as this should often end in madness ; that it should require the hands to be chained and the limbs to be fettered ; and that it should even drive the miserable victim to raise his arm against his own life, and to rush uncalled into the presence of that God whose will and purposes have been so grievously misunderstood ?

But let us suppose that the predestinarian esteems himself one of the Elect, and it will appear that, even in this more common case, the moral effects of the doctrine are not good. As all the proofs of election must be internal, and open only to the examination of the person himself, the weaker his mind is, the more disposed will he be to think well of his own character ; the stronger will

become his persuasion that he is one of the chosen ; and the more rapid will be his progress towards enthusiasm and all the spiritual disorders which accompany that passion. It has been remarked by a shrewd observer of human nature, that, “ in tracing the coherence among the systems of modern theology, we may observe that the doctrine of absolute decrees has ever been intimately connected with the enthusiastic spirit ; as that doctrine affords the highest degree of triumph, joy, and security to the Elect, and exalts them by infinite degrees above the rest of mankind.”* But an evil not less than that now mentioned consists in the hardness of heart which is produced by frequently contemplating, even in imagination, the horrible catastrophe which the doctrine necessarily implies. By defending the claims of what they are pleased to call the “ vindictive justice” of God, Calvinistic writers gradually permit themselves to regard the eternal torment of the greater part of the human race, not only with perfect

* Hume’s History of England.

calmness, but even with a kind of satisfaction and complacency. Some of them have proceeded so far as to call it a *comfortable* doctrine, and to summon Christians to give high praise and thanks to the Almighty for so striking an instance of his impartiality and boundless mercy !

Were a whole city laid in ruins, and one individual saved from the general desolation, a solitary witness of the misery which had overtaken his townsmen, his relatives, and his family ; or were all the crew of a goodly ship swallowed up in the waves except one survivor, who reaches the shore in safety ; it is probable that both these persons would experience a glow of gratitude, and even utter impassioned shouts of thanksgiving for their singular deliverance. The strong feeling of selfishness which is inherent to human nature, and which acts most powerfully in the moment of danger, will account for any transient suppression of sympathy in circumstances so appalling. But no man of ordinary sensibility would pronounce such events comfortable, or enjoy any permanent satisfaction from the melan-

choly contrast between his own lot and that of his less fortunate companions. It can therefore only arise from the peculiar delusion incident to spiritual inquiries, when viewed through a false light, that the believer in personal election should ever call upon the Christian world to give glory to God for having selected a few individuals as objects of favour, while the great majority of the sons of Adam were consigned to everlasting torment. With this dreadful impression upon his mind—in the horrible certainty that the most of those with whom he has intercourse in the business of life, those whom he loves and respects, those upon whom he depends, and those who partake of his bounty—are fast hastening on through this valley of tears to a fixed and inevitable perdition prepared for them before the earth was created,—he yet feels it consistent with the religion of Christ and with the emotions of flesh and blood, to rejoice before God and to laud his name, because that, whilst the Almighty arm plucked himself like a brand out of the burning, the Divine Justice shall be glorified in the eternal destruction of countless myriads.

Were this perversion of Scripture and moral sentiment limited to simple theory, we should have less reason to deplore it. We might smile at the heartless impiety of Calvin when he says that "God, by the preaching of the word, equally invites all men to him, even those to whom he intends it for the savour of death, and as a ground of heavier condemnation;" that "some men are born, devoted from the womb to everlasting torment;" and that while eternal life is preordained to one class, "eternal damnation is preordained to others." We might also peruse with unconcern the reasoning of Edwards, when he maintains that sin and punishment are necessary for the welfare of creation, and that the glory of God could not be perfectly manifested without a certain proportion of suffering in the flames of hell. All this might be ascribed to the bewildering influence of system, and to that absence of consciousness which arises from the study of abstract language and numbers on speculative grounds. The problem of Election appears to the mind of a deep divine like a theorem to the mathemati-

cian, or a question of attraction and repulsion to the chemist. He advances towards his conclusion with the same intellectual confidence and with the same insensibility as to the object of his argument ; and although, in his hands, the result affects the eternal condition of the human race, his feelings are as little moved as if it were confined to the relations of figure and the properties of matter.*

* The coolness with which certain writers have speculated on the doctrine of Election would be absolutely amusing, were it not displayed on a subject of such tremendous import. They descant on the small number of the Elect, and on the countless myriads who are preordained to everlasting torment, with as much self-possession as if they were discussing the comparative advantages of steam-coaches and balloons. Their theories receive no check from the consideration that it is the eternal state of human beings which they have undertaken to determine. Now, were the pious dreamers to recollect, that about thirty millions of our race are born and die every year,—that every day nearly a hundred thousand immortal creatures give up the ghost,—that a stream is rushing on which carries thousands into eternity every hour,—would they not hesitate before pronouncing that the eye of the omnipotent and most gracious God can witness with complacency such numbers of his intellectual children passing every minute into the horrors of never-ending death ? Well has it been remarked, that the corruption of what is good is of all things the very worst.

The main objection to all theories of religion which depreciate the destiny of man, as a rational and immortal being, respects the sentiment which is thereby generated in all cases of religious difference. The fury of persecution is greatly inflamed by the belief that the miserable victims are already accursed by God, excluded from his covenant, and therefore fit objects of human indignation and punishment. We may confidently assert, that Christianized Europe would not have been so frequently disgraced by the use of the rack, the cord, and the fagot, had the Romanist not been convinced that the heretics, whom he was about to immolate at the shrine of his peculiar faith, were to pass at once from the hands of the executioner into the bitter pains of eternal death. Notions so unworthy of the Deity are always found fatal to man; and hence the tendency of the doctrine now before us will never appear in the promoting of that charity which thinketh no evil, which suffereth long, and is kind.

Viewing the subject, again, in a merely profes-

sional light, I know not how a clergyman who holds the doctrine of personal election and reprobation can proceed in the discharge of his duty. It seems to me, that when he has once explained the tenet according to the Calvinistic hypothesis, he ought to shut his Bible, and say, "God's will be done!" Should a sinful man go to him, and lament that his conscience is loaded with the weight of his transgressions, expressing a desire, at the same time, to reconcile himself to God by confession and prayer, on what ground could he receive him or give him encouragement? Were the minister to speak consistently, he would say,—“I fear that you are not one of the Elect, because no one of that happy number, in whom grace is always irresistible and indefectible, could have led such a life as you acknowledge yours to have been. God does, indeed, sometimes permit the best of his own children to fall, but they immediately recover under the powerful operation of his Spirit; whereas your case is that of habitual and long-continued wickedness,—a state in which the Elect are never found, and therefore I conclude that your name

has not been written in the Book of Life. There is too much reason to apprehend that you belong to the miserable host of the Reprobate, for whom are prepared the flames and torture of the bottomless pit, and to whom the mercy of God will never be extended, either in this world or in the world to come. But, should I be mistaken, and you are, notwithstanding these unfavourable appearances, one of the Chosen, you have no reason to fear; for, however guilty, obstinate, and impenitent you have hitherto been, be assured that your salvation rests on the Rock of Ages, is confirmed by the eternal decree of God, and that neither the devil nor man can for a single moment place it in jeopardy."

In such a case, it is obvious, the juster inference would be, that the wretched man was not one of the Elect, and, consequently, that he was shut out by the very terms of his existence from repentance here, and from everlasting life hereafter. What then could be done? The minister could not pray that the poor suppliant should be elected by God; that act being performed in eter-

nity and not in time. What step could possibly be taken by the one or by the other? Would not the inevitable alternative, that, if a man be elected, he *must* be saved, and if he is not elected, he *cannot* be saved, obtrude itself as an insuperable bar to every sincere application to the mercy of the great Creator, as well as to the means of grace which he has appointed? There must, I presume, be some way of eluding this difficulty, and of praying even in the face of absolute decrees; but upon what ground the metaphysics of the point are made to rest, or how the practice can be reduced to a consistency with the theory, it is not easy for a plain man to conjecture.

The clergyman, on the other hand, who exhorts and comforts, after the example of our Saviour and his Apostles, has no such obstacles to encounter. The spirit of the Gospel in his mind is identified with the angelical announcement,—“Behold I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to you and to all people:” or with the assurance of St Paul,—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus

Christ came into the world to save sinners ;” or, finally, with the encouraging declaration of St John, the beloved disciple,—“ My little children, these things I write unto you that ye sin not : But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.” He calls to mind, too, that our Redeemer, while upon earth, never met a human being who belonged to the class of the Reprobate ; that is, one to whom salvation was utterly impossible ; that he never once mentioned the existence of such an unhappy distinction among the children of Adam as the hopeless victims of Divine wrath, devoted to damnation before the world was made ; that, although he had occasion to see many bad persons, Scribes, Pharisees, Publicans, and Sinners, he never saw one whom he did not invite to repentance and to happiness ; and that, in a remarkable instance, where he had to begin his work of mercy by casting out seven devils, he discovered no secret decree binding Mary to eternal perdition ; but, on

the contrary, a soul which could be purified from all its guilt, and made fit for the society of angels in a better world.

This blessed example was followed by all the Apostles of our Divine Master. Like their heavenly Teacher, they regarded every man who would listen to them as capable of salvation and of God's favour: and, in no period of their journeyings and labours, did they ever encounter a single individual to whom they had to communicate the fearful intelligence that his condemnation was sealed in the records of Eternity before the world began. Nay, even the ancient Prophets, who lived in ages of comparative darkness, could address those whose hands were full of blood and extortion, and say to them in the name of God,—
 “ Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow: Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet,

they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

On this ground, the clergyman who believes that none are positively excluded, by an eternal decree, from Divine favour, can exercise all the charities of his profession without inconsistency or obstacle. In imitation of the Redeemer, he can speak of mercy and of hope to all, even to the chief of sinners, if smitten with a sense of their guilt, and possessed with a sincere desire to cast off their evil habits and to reform their lives. In his eyes, the door of salvation is never shut against any of the human race till the dust has returned to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it. To a rigid and consistent Calvinist, on the other hand, the greater part of the Gospel must be a dead letter : he reads it with a veil on his heart or on his understanding ; he sees a blessing in it, which, however, flows in a narrow channel, or is frozen by his system like the cold rivers of the north ; it is a tree of life, but surrounded with flaming swords, and cannot be ap-

proached, except by the few for whom it was ordained.

Some writers have attributed to the disgust and perplexity created by the doctrines of Calvin a great portion of the scepticism which prevails in the countries where they were originally professed. It is, at all events, a remarkable fact, that almost all the Calvinistic churches abroad have relinquished the true faith, and have become either Socinian or deistical in their principles. At Geneva, where this system, in its present form at least, first arose, Christianity can hardly be said to exist ; for the reformed clergy in that State have cast away the distinguishing tenets of our holy religion,—the divinity of our Lord, and belief in the atonement which he made for our sins.

The Protestants, too, in France and the Low Countries have, with few exceptions, arrived at the same point of degeneration ; and even in England a similar effect has been produced by the operation of a similar cause. The Puritans, who took pride in identifying themselves with the disciples of Calvin, have gradually sunk down into

Unitarians ;—a class of professors who symbolize closely with the Socinians, both in what they hold and in what they reject. Election and its subsidiary tenets could not bear the scrutiny of that enlightened criticism which succeeded the ardent and rather enthusiastic zeal with which certain stages of the Reformation were accompanied ; but, unfortunately, in the hasty rejection of what is false, much of what is true and important was involved in the same fate.

Such is uniformly the result of establishing opinions which refuse to accord with the natural sentiments of the human mind. The thinking man is offended, and says, “ The doctrines you propound are contrary to every correct idea of God’s goodness, justice, and truth ; they cannot therefore be revealed upon his authority. The record from which you draw them is either not well understood, or it cannot possess the high sanction which you usually claim for it. Examine, therefore, the ground upon which you have built your system, and ascertain whether it has been well chosen, and able to bear the structure

which you have raised upon it ; for if it shall appear that your notions as to Election and Reprobation are really authorised by Scripture, I must withdraw my belief from the Divine inspiration of the Bible."

This is the first step in the process of rationalism. Inquisitive men examine into the original languages of Scripture and the opinions of the inspired writers who used them ; and finding that the higher dogmas of Calvinism rest entirely on ignorance or misconception, they reject them with loathing as well as with a profound feeling of contempt for those who could so far sacrifice their reason to a merely human authority. Having succeeded in one point, they advance with undue boldness to attack sounder doctrines ; against which, perhaps, they had at first hardly any other objection than that they were held by the same men who had allowed themselves to be so miserably deceived. The result is what I have already mentioned. The Socinians and Unitarians of the present day are the lineal descendants of those rigid Calvinists who flourished during the great

Civil War and in the times of the Commonwealth. They have indeed relinquished the peculiar tenets of their forefathers. Such doctrines could not withstand the more enlightened investigation to which they have since been repeatedly subjected; but, in this case, the rejection of them has involved the abandonment of some very essential points of faith, the absence of which, in the systems of divinity now alluded to, has reduced the Gospel to a mere collection of moral precepts.

I cannot conclude this discourse without remarking, that no modern author, with whose writings I am acquainted, teaches the doctrines of Calvin as they are laid down in the Institutes of that celebrated commentator. This fact, it may be alleged, ought to have supplied a reason for not bringing any portion of them before the public, even with the view of exposing the misconceptions on which they are grounded. My answer is, that, although there are few in the present age who have courage to be consistent and to adopt the whole system of their master, there are many who continue to use the language of Calvinism, and to

profess a modified belief in its doctrines. They retain enough of it to perplex weak heads. They speak of election, and predestination, and calling, without condescending to explain whether they use the terms in the Calvinistic sense, or merely in the acceptation in which they were originally employed by our Lord and his Apostles ; and hence they create doubts and throw darkness into the minds of the uninstructed, and thereby destroy the peace and hope of the Christian life.

Every one who has studied this subject must be satisfied that Calvinism, if it is not held to the full extent in which it was taught by its author, cannot be held at all. It is a chain so artificially constructed, that if one link be destroyed the whole will fall to the ground. A *moderate* Calvinist, therefore, will find himself involved in incessant contradictions ; his doctrine will be derived from one school and his practical exhortations from another ; and, reduced to the necessity of using words without any precise meaning, he will have the mortification to discover that he only perplexes the understanding and agitates the

heart. For these reasons, it must appear desirable that, since the opinions themselves are generally abandoned, the phraseology associated with them should likewise be relinquished ; and that men who no longer believe in personal election and reprobation should cease to employ forms of speech which, from their avowed ambiguity, can no longer afford either instruction or comfort.

It is no small disadvantage to the cause of evangelical truth and of Scriptural criticism, that the language of technical theology exercises upon most minds a greater influence than the plainest statements of an inspired writer, if not sanctioned by human authority. As long as men shall submit to the degrading vassalage imposed by a few despots who have gained a triumph in the field of religious controversy, we must not expect that the faith of the Gospel will be purified from the foul mixtures with which it has been polluted. St Paul will continue to be read through the medium of the Calvinistic hypothesis or of the Arminian theory ; and hence the milk of the word will not only be miserably diluted, but rendered un-

wholesome and pernicious in an extreme degree.

Impressed by this conviction, I have endeavoured to represent the reasoning of the Apostle in connexion with the doctrines which prevailed in his own age, as well as with the language to which his earlier pursuits had familiarized his mind. The terms which he employed in his profound disquisitions on the purposes of God and the religious history of the world, have been interpreted on a principle which may be traced through all his writings,—the analogy between the Jewish economy and that which was appointed to succeed it, under the administration of the Redeemer.

In conclusion, the reader is reminded that the object of this dissertation has not been to throw any new light on the ways of God to man considered at large, and far less on that mysterious providence which is exercised through the medium of revelation. I have confined my exertions to establish the single point that the doctrine of Election, in the Calvinistic and more popular sense of the word, is nowhere taught in the Bible,

—that the sacred writers knew of no such tenet,—and that it was not until the primitive notions of the Gospel were corrupted by an intermixture of Pagan philosophy that such speculations were admitted within the pale of Christian opinion. As all men are invited to repentance and salvation, we are justified in believing that all men are in a salvable state ; and as all are exhorted to use the means of grace, we may presume that there is no person to whom those means, if seriously employed, will not prove available to the attainment of pardon and happiness.* This comfortable doctrine is confirmed by the assurances of our Lord, and by his practice too even in the worst cases of

* There is a text in the 12th chapter of the Hebrews which has been frequently misunderstood and grossly perverted. Esau is said “to have sought repentance carefully with tears,” and not to have found it ; and hence an argument for absolute decrees. Every scholar knows, however, that the Greek word which is here translated repentance, signifies literally change of mind or purpose ; and, moreover, that the change of mind for which Esau entreated, was that his father Isaac would retract the blessing conferred upon Jacob and bestow it upon himself. “Hast thou but one blessing, O my father ? Bless me, even me also, O my father ; and he lift up his voice and wept.”

human guilt that ever came before him ; it is confirmed also by the declarations of the holy Apostles who taught the Christian world that God desireth not the death of a sinner ; that he would have all men to be saved ; and that the object of his long-suffering and patience is to bring mankind to repentance and to eternal life. In this sense of the terms, the “ godly consideration of predestination and our election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons ;” and it is only to “ curious and carnal persons, who lack the spirit of Christ,” that it can ever prove “ a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.”* This doctrine, in short, when rightly understood, is perfectly consistent with the exhortation of St Peter, who said to the *called* and *elect* of his own age,—“ Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure :

* Seventeenth Article “ Of Predestination and Election.”

for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”*

* The advocates of the Calvinistic hypothesis, in order to diminish the weight of St Peter's authority, have translated the tenth verse of his Second Epistle as follows :—*Make yourselves sure of your calling and election*; which, of course, they exhort their disciples to accomplish by leading good lives in the present evil world. I shall say nothing of the doctrine which is here recommended, but simply remark that the critical skill employed to explain away the plain meaning of a plain text is worthy of the cause which it is brought to support. It amounts to a contemptible equivocation on the English word *sure*. Suppose the epithet *βεβαιος*, in the verse in question, had been rendered *stedfast*, what would have become of the ingenious commentary?

The term *βεβαιος* occurs only eight times in the New Testament, and is translated indiscriminately into the words “*sure*,” “*firm*,” or “*stedfast*.”

Rom. iv. 16. That the promise might be *sure*.

2 Cor. i. 7. And our hope of you is *stedfast*.

Heb. ii. 2. The word spoken by angels was *stedfast*.

— iii. 6. If we hold the confidence and rejoicing of the hope *firm* unto the end.

— iii. 16. If we hold the beginning of our confidence *stedfast* unto the end.

— vi. 19. Which hope we have both *sure* and *stedfast*.

— ix. 17. A testament is *of force* after men are dead.

2 Peter i. 16. Make your calling and election *sure*.

DISCOURSE III.

ON JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

ROMANS iii. 28. *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law.*

As the proper understanding of this subject depends much upon a clear comprehension of the language in which it is expressed, it becomes necessary that we should define, in the outset, the principal terms which are employed by the inspired writer, according to their usual acceptation in ancient times.

To be *justified*, is an expression which, being borrowed from the courts of law, denoted acquittal from any such charge as, if proved and followed

up, would have entailed punishment upon the offender. When the party accused was found innocent, his justification was, of course, simple acquittal; but in cases where guilt was established, and the penalty, from other considerations, was not exacted, the justification of the criminal must have been viewed in the light of a pardon. The act of justification, in short, had respect to the release from a threatened punishment, whether deserved or not, rather than to the character of the individual who was placed at the bar; and the sentence, accordingly, pronounced on such an occasion, declared the party *just* or *righteous*, only so far as the claims of law were concerned and not strictly with regard to his principles at large, or even to his conduct in other matters.

Hence, as the justification of a sinner, in the eye of God, proceeded not upon the ground of innocence, but upon other grounds, which will be explained hereafter, it clearly follows, that to “be justified” and to be pardoned meant, in the Apostolic age, the same thing in effect.

The term *Faith*, from the variety of founda-

tions upon which it rests, and the numerous subjects to which it is applied, has attracted, in later times, many subordinate meanings, the effect of which is rather to perplex than to illustrate the doctrines of Scripture. In general, however, it denotes *belief in testimony*; and is modified according to the nature of the object on which it is exercised, as well as by the particular channel through which the evidence has been conveyed. In the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, for example, we are presented with every species of belief, from that which respects historical facts, and even mere tradition, to the higher faith of the Gospel itself. Agreeably to this enlarged view, a man exercises faith when he firmly believes what has already come to pass, as well as what he is assured, on sufficient authority, will come to pass in future times. It is only by this kind of faith that we can be said to understand the great historical truth,—“that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear;” the basis on which we repose our confidence respecting that tenet being

the Divine record itself contained in the book of Genesis.

But the word faith is often used in a more restricted sense, being equivalent, in most parts of the Apostolical writings, to belief in Christianity, as revealed by the inspired servants of the Redeemer. In this acceptation of the term, we may expound the text now under consideration so as to express this great evangelical principle ; namely, that, in the age of St Paul, mankind received the remission of sins upon a hearty reception of the Gospel, and a regular observance of its ordinances. They were justified or pardoned by faith, without the deeds of the law.

By the *Law*, the works of which were not essential to justification, the Apostle generally means the Mosaical economy taken at large, although he occasionally restricts the import of the term to the ceremonial observances of that institution. On the other hand, as has been observed by commentators, he sometimes includes in the same expression every species of obligation to a virtuous life, whatever may be the autho-

riety or sanction upon which the duty is enforced. In the following passage the word law occurs in two at least of the three senses now mentioned :—
“ As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law ; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law : For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves ; which show the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts, the meanwhile, accusing or else excusing one another.”

It is, indeed, one of the main sources of the difficulty peculiar to the writings of St Paul, that he uses the same word in different senses, or at least with the shade of meaning so much changed as to endanger the accuracy of every conclusion in which the varying import of the term has not been appreciated. Even in the verses just quoted there will arise an apparent discrepancy if they

be hastily collated with other parts of the Epistle, and interpreted without due regard to the main object of the whole composition. It is said, for instance, that “the doers of the law shall be justified before God ;” whereas, in several of the subsequent chapters, it is declared in the most solemn manner, that by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified, and that mankind are justified by faith without the deeds of the law. In such cases the harmony of his reasoning can only be perceived by such readers as are aware that the Apostle not only uses the word law in acceptations slightly varied according to the nature of his subject, but also that, in one place, he states hypothetically, and for the sake of argument with the Jews, the very position which, on Christian principles, he afterwards disproves and even condemns.

The doctrine, then, which appears to be taught in the first part of the Epistle to the Romans is the necessity of gratuitous justification, founded upon the moral history and actual condition of the human race. The inspired writer establishes the melan-

choly fact that both Jews and Gentiles were in a state of condemnation ; and that, if God had not been pleased to devise a method of reconciliation, they must all have perished in their sins. To the grace or mercy of their Creator, therefore, and not to any works of righteousness which either of these two classes of men could perform, were they indebted for the pardon of their transgressions ; and, in order to obtain the full benefit of the new dispensation, it was only necessary that they should relinquish all pretensions to Divine favour as connected with their ancient rule of life, and believe in the testimony by which their privileges and blessings were secured. This act of faith, or reception of the Gospel as preached by the Apostles, was the condition on which the pardon of their sins depended, as also their admission into that new covenant which supplied them with the means of working out their salvation in the fear and love of God. Therefore we conclude, says St Paul, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

The explanation of the terms in this case is al-

most sufficient of itself to set forth the meaning of the inspired writer ; but as the subject is extremely important, and has, it is suspected, been obscured by much error and ignorance at various periods since the Reformation, it may be useful,

First, To consider the import of the text as it regarded the state of the church in the Apostolic age ;

Secondly, To determine how far the doctrine contained in it is applicable to the present time ; and,

Thirdly, To point out the practical mistakes which have arisen from neglecting the distinction involved in the foregoing heads ; that is, from applying to Christians in our days, certain expressions which had an exclusive reference to the condition of the first converts to the faith of the Redeemer.

I. The reasoning of St Paul on justification, or forgiveness of sin, respects the character of those who, at different epochs, were received into covenant with God, as the members of his visible church. As all the world lay in wickedness and

under the sentence of eternal death, a certain change was necessary in order to qualify any portion of the human race for becoming the people of Jehovah, and for enjoying the privileges of that favoured condition to which it was his intention to raise them. This change was supposed to arise from submission to the Divine Will, either by exercising belief on a matter of revelation, or by exhibiting obedience in following out the requisitions of a positive law. The Jews maintained that, for the purpose now mentioned, the observance of their institutions was altogether indispensable ; and that no one could be esteemed just or righteous in the eye of Heaven who did not regularly comply with the injunctions of Moses, both moral and ceremonial. But St Paul, on the contrary, urged the opinion that, in certain circumstances, the respect shown to the authority of God by *believing* what he reveals is of equal value with the obedience which manifests itself in *doing* what he commands. The surrender of the intellect and affections may in both cases be regarded as nearly the same ; and hence,

as far as anything which man can do, may be regarded as well pleasing in the sight of the great Creator, a steady reliance upon that which he promises may be held as not less expressive of duty than a regular observance of that which he enjoins in the way of practice. Nay, the prostration of spirit which the former displays is a more suitable offering to the Supreme Will than the most constant devotion to ritual performances, and affords, at the same time, a better security for sincere and permanent obedience. The Apostle farther argues against the Jews, that, in point of fact, the basis of their own national righteousness or justification was laid upon belief and not upon the practice of a ceremonial institution,—upon faith and not upon works. Abraham, their ancestor, believed the promises of God in relation to his own fortunes and to the history of his family; and this belief was held of such importance, that, in virtue of it, he was appointed the father of the faithful, the head of those tribes which were in due time to become the people of the Lord, and from which, according to his earthly

generation, the Redeemer of mankind was to spring. His faith, in short, was accounted unto him as the ground of that qualification which fitted him for entering into covenant with God. Hence he was esteemed righteous and justified,—that is, freed from all the impurities which attached to him as a Pagan and the son of an idolator, as well as from the guilt of such transgressions as he might have committed in his unregenerate state.

The conclusion of St Paul's argument may be stated as follows :—If Abraham was received into covenant with God on account of his faith, why may not the Gentiles be admitted into the Christian Church on the same terms? If his belief was made the ground of justification, why should not a similar belief have the same effect on the part of the Greeks and Romans? For, if the observances of the Mosaical Law were indispensable to that end, it is manifest that Abraham could not have been justified, because he lived some hundreds of years before the birth of the Jewish lawgiver. But Abraham was by God accounted righteous, and made the head of the ancient

church before the ceremonial code was instituted ; a fact which proves, beyond all controversy, that the works of the Law ought not to be held essential in order to qualify an individual for being received within the pale of the Divine covenant. “ Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”—“ For the promise that he should be the heir of the world,—that is, the possessor of the land of Canaan,—was not to Abraham or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.”

Holding it, therefore, as proved, that the justification which is proclaimed by St Paul might be obtained without works, we must be careful to determine its precise limits, and the extent of the privileges which it conveys. That it is to be regarded as something different from eternal life is manifest from two important considerations. In the first place, the Apostle never confounds the one with the other, nor leads his converts to imagine that their justification will necessarily terminate in the enjoyment of heaven. He says, in-

deed, that, being justified by faith, we “have peace with God,”—we are so far reconciled to the Creator through our Lord Jesus Christ, that we have access to the grace of the Gospel, and even rejoice in the hope of glory. He reminds the converts at Rome, that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ; adding, that, “being *now justified* by his blood,” we have a much more abundant ground of hope that we shall through him be saved from the Divine wrath.—“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, *being reconciled*, we shall be saved by his life.” Here he rests the hope of final salvation on the mercy of God, already experienced by them in the act of justification, by which they had been reconciled and taken within the bounds of the covenant of grace ; encouraging them with the assurance that the Almighty, who had done so much for them while in a state of sin and condemnation, would afford them still greater assistance and proofs of his loving-kindness now that they were justified and made members of his visible Church. Justifica-

tion, it will be observed, is always spoken of as having taken place, whereas salvation is uniformly represented as still future : justification is the remission of sins committed prior to the era of conversion ; salvation is the attainment of everlasting happiness in heaven. Not a single passage can be found in the Epistles, nor indeed in any part of the New Testament, in which justification, when applied to Christians exclusively, denotes the sentence to be pronounced at the day of judgment. Nor do the Apostles ever tell their converts that they will hereafter be justified ; but always address them as persons who have been already justified.*

The other consideration, which seems to prove that the justification bestowed upon the first Christians at their entrance into the Church was something different from an assurance of eternal life, is founded upon the statement made by St Paul himself, in the second chapter of this Epistle, relative to the principle on which the final doom of

* Tomline's Refutation, p. 100.

mankind at large shall be determined. He declares to the Jews, who had long enjoyed similar advantages as the chosen people, that, in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of Heaven, God will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, he will give eternal life; while unto them who are contentious, and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, he will assign indignation and wrath. He will inflict tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but he will bestow honour and peace upon every man that worketh good, upon the Jew first, and also upon the Gentile; for there is no respect of persons with God.*

* I cannot refuse myself the satisfaction of transcribing the following paraphrase of this important passage:—"And doest thou, who condemnest the heathen for such actions, and yet committest the same thyself, doest thou calculate upon escaping the judgment of God? Or abusest thou the riches of the Divine goodness and long-suffering, and vainly turnest them into

The state into which the covenanted Gentiles were brought, upon listening to the call of the Gospel, bore a close resemblance to that from which the Jewish people, as a body, were ejected for their unbelief and obduracy of heart. In

a foundation for thy pride and self-complacency, not knowing that the goodness of God in sparing thee and thy nation so long, was intended to lead thee to repentance? But, instead of using it to this gracious purpose, thou, by the hardness and impenitence of thy heart, heapest up against thyself a store of vengeance, which will assuredly come upon thee in that day when the anger of God against sin, and his justice in punishing it, shall be awfully displayed,—in that great day of account, when God will reward every man according to his works. Then will he award to those who seek for honour, and glory, and incorruptibility, by a patient continuance in well-doing, the object of their labours, namely, eternal life; while for those who contend against and disobey the truth, and obey the dictates of their own lusts, are reserved wrath and punishment, tribulation and anguish, for every individual that worketh wickedness, first for the Jew, and then for the Gentile. But, on the other hand, glory, honour, and peace, are prepared for every one that practises virtue, first for the Jew, and then for the Gentile. For in that awful day there will be no distinction of persons made by God, except in reference to their moral state.”

—See “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans: with an Introduction, Paraphrase, and Notes, by the Rev. C. H. Terrot, A. M.”—a learned and very useful work.

either case it was a possession of spiritual privileges, as yet not extended to the world at large. But if the Jew, amidst all the riches of the goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering of God, yielded so far to his hard and impenitent heart as only to treasure up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath, it is to be presumed, that Christians might, in a similar way, forfeit all their advantages, and even turn them to their own destruction. The Apostle, in fact, alarms the vigilance of the Roman disciples by bringing before their eyes the possibility of this very result:—"If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee."

In a word, the justification which St Paul predicates of the Christians to whom he wrote, expresses a quality or condition which belonged to the whole Church. As the converts to the Gospel were all considered as the elect, so were they, in a similar acceptation, regarded as called, justified, sanctified, and saved. These words were applied without distinction to all the members of the visible body of the Redeemer. Every one who

was admitted by baptism into the fold of Christ's flock, was held as pardoned or justified in the sight of God. Writing to the Galatians, for example, the same Apostle assures them that they were "all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." St Peter, in like manner, alluding to the privilege of pardon or justification conferred upon every believer at his baptism, remarks, that "he who lacketh these things,"—faith, virtue, temperance, brotherly-kindness, and charity,—"is blind, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." Nay, the great messenger of the Gentiles himself, upon his conversion to the true faith, was desired to have recourse to baptism, and thereby "to wash away his sins;" that is, to apply the seal of the Divine covenant to his justification, or the pardon of all the transgressions which he had committed in the past portion of his life.

The change which took place in the condition of Pagans, and even of Jews, when they became Christians, was esteemed so great, that they were

said not only to be regenerated or born again, to be made the children of God, to be justified and sanctified, but even to be *saved*, although their everlasting welfare still depended upon their perseverance in faith and obedience. St Paul, on this ground, assures the Ephesians, that “by grace were they saved through faith ;” and, anticipating the happy period when his own brethren, according to the flesh, will acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, he announces, that “all Israel shall be saved.” It is manifest, therefore, unless we conclude, contrary to the plain doctrine of the Bible, that all Christians are to be finally put in possession of eternal happiness, that the words elected, justified, sanctified, and saved, are, by the inspired writers, applied to large bodies of men, without any direct or certain reference to their future state.*

* “It is plain,” says Mr Locke, “that the salvation which St Paul, in this Discourse concerning the nation of the Jews, speaks of, is not eternal happiness in heaven, but he means by it the possession of the true religion here upon earth. That all the Jewish nation may become the people of God again,

II. We proceed now to determine how far the doctrine contained in the text is applicable to Christians in the present times.

It is obvious, then, at the first glance, that the difference between being converted at a mature age to the faith of the Gospel, and the being introduced into the Church in infancy, must necessarily lead to some modification in the use of those Scriptural phrases which respect the profession of our holy religion, and the privileges which belong to it. Hence arises another of the cases contem-

by taking up the Christian profession, may be easily conceived. But that every person of such a Christian nation shall attain eternal salvation in heaven, I think nobody can imagine to be here intended.—Romans xi. 26.

“ He that reads St Paul with attention cannot but observe, that, speaking of the Gentiles, he calls their being brought back again from their apostasy into the kingdom of God, their being *saved*. Before they were thus brought to be the people of God under the Messiah, they were Aliens, Enemies, without hope, without God, dead in trespasses and sins : and therefore, when, by faith in Christ, they came to be reconciled, and to be in covenant again with God, as his subjects and liege people, they were in the way of salvation, and, if they persevered, could not miss attaining it, though they were not yet in actual possession.—Ephes. ii. 8.”

plated by Dr Paley, in which, by applying to the personal condition of Christians at the present day, titles, expressions, propositions, and arguments, which belonged solely to the situation of Christianity at its first institution, we create the most perplexing difficulties. The conversion of a grown person from heathenism to the belief of the Gospel was a change of which we have now no just conception. It was a new name, a new hope, a new language, a new society, a new object of worship, a new rule of life ; while the prospect of futurity which it opened up was, beyond all imagination, awful and august. It is manifest, that no similar change can be experienced by us to whom the facts, precepts, and hopes of Christianity have been familiar from our earliest days. " Yet," as is remarked by the judicious writer whom I have just named, " we will retain the same language, and what has been the consequence ? One sort of men observing nothing in the lives of Christians corresponding to the magnificence, if I may so say, of these expressions, have been tempted to conclude that the expressions themselves had

no foundation in truth and nature, or in anything but the enthusiasm of their authors. Others, again, understand these phrases to signify nothing more than that gradual amendment of life and conversation which reason and religion sometimes produce in particular Christians: of which interpretation it is truly said, that it degrades too much the proper force of language to apply expressions of such energy and import to an event so ordinary in its own nature, and which is common to Christianity with every other moral institution. Lastly, a third sort, in order to satisfy these expressions to their full extent, have imagined to themselves certain perceptible impulses of the Holy Ghost, by which, in an instant, and in a manner no doubt sufficiently extraordinary, they are ‘regenerate and born of the spirit;’ they become ‘new creatures;’ they are made the sons of God who were before the ‘children of wrath;’ they are freed from sin and from death; they are chosen and sealed, without a possibility of fall, unto final salvation.”

Of all the expressions alluded to by Dr Paley,

that of being *justified*, upon a mere reception into the church, is least suitable to the circumstances and ideas of modern times. We can speak without any impropriety of an infant being regenerated or born again, of its being sanctified by baptism, made a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, and being placed in a state of salvation. These modes of speech do not violate the idiom of our language, nor interfere greatly with the ordinary acceptation of words. But to say of an infant that it was “justified” upon its admission within the pale of the Christian covenant, is an assertion which would sound harshly in our ears ; and yet there is nothing in the circumstances of Christians in these days which corresponds to the justification spoken of by St Paul, except the change which is effected upon our covenanted relationship to God by the initiatory ordinance of baptism. It is for this reason that the author of the Homily on the “Salvation of Mankind” uses the terms baptism and justification in the same sense. “Our office,” says he, “is not to pass the time of this present life un-

fruitfully and idly after that we are *baptized or justified*, not caring how few good works we do to the glory of God and profit of our neighbours." The whole doctrine of the church, too, as it respects baptism, assumes the principle that sin is washed away by that divine ordinance; proceeding on the very same ground which was occupied by the Apostles in their statements relative to the condition of the first Christians. The Office of Confirmation makes a direct allusion to the same tenet. All who were baptized in the days of St Paul were understood to have obtained the pardon of their sins; and hence the same conclusion is drawn in our days in respect to infants whose only sin must be that which is conveyed to them by inheritance from their first parents. From that sin, therefore, or rather from the penal effects of it, children are held to be justified and set free by the ministry of water and of the spirit in the sacrament of regeneration.

It is not surprising that the great change of circumstances in modern times, compared with the situation and character of the primitive converts,

should have led divines, not deeply read in Christian antiquities, to give a meaning quite different from that just stated to the words election and regeneration, and, above all, to justification. In the more popular systems of divinity the last of these terms has become associated with an act of divine grace of which we find no account in the Scriptures, and which does not correspond to any of the senses in which it is used by the Apostles. By these inspired teachers justification is almost exclusively employed to denote the change, or rather perhaps the effect of the change, from heathenism to Christianity. In a few instances it appears indeed to have a reference to the final acquittal of the good at the day of judgment; as when St Paul says, "by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." But in no case can I discover any distinct or intelligible use of the term in an intermediate acceptation; especially as denoting a grant of pardon at some particular period in the course of a believer's life, having a prospective effect on his spiritual condition till the day of his

death, and thereby securing his eternal happiness. For such a justification, I repeat, no authority is to be found in the Sacred Writings, when honestly interpreted according to their plain and original meaning.

In what sense, then, are men justified by faith at the present day, and to what extent are the words of the Apostle applicable to Christians in the very altered circumstances in which they are now placed? I am not inclined to adopt the answer which, in a similar case, is given by Dr Paley, and to assert that, strictly and properly speaking, men who have been baptized in infancy are not justified by faith at all, in the actual condition of the church; but it may, nevertheless, be safely stated, as a first principle of Christian theology, that if justification be understood to comprehend everlasting happiness in heaven, faith alone is no longer adequate to its attainment.* The office

* “If such expressions of Scripture—born again, a new creature, born of God, saints, elect,—do not mean this, what do they mean? To which we answer, Nothing; nothing,

which faith without works performed for the early converts—admission into the church—has been performed for us already by our birth and baptism ; our eternal salvation, therefore, depends upon the use which we, under God and through the aid of his grace, shall make, during this life, of the privileges with which we are blessed, and of the means of improvement in spiritual knowledge, virtue, and holiness, with which we are supplied. In our position, we must listen to the language of St James, who already found the doctrine of St Paul liable to perversion, and allow ourselves to be taught that faith without works is dead, and cannot therefore be of any avail to our everlasting welfare.

It can hardly be necessary to add, that the meritorious cause of human salvation is the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and that believers owe to his mediation not only their exemption from the penal effects of sin, but likewise all the means and

that is, to us ; nothing to be found or sought for in the present circumstances of Christianity.”—*Sermons and Tracts*, p. 59.

motives by the use of which an inheritance may be finally secured among them who are sanctified. But we must not allow ourselves to be deceived by attributing too much to any species of abstract belief in that great event. On the contrary, the value of faith as an instrument for working out our salvation must be confined to its connexion with holiness and obedience; as realizing the sanctions of the divine law, and as constituting the evidence of things not seen. He that cometh unto God must believe that God is, and also that he is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him; and hence it is manifest, that without faith it is impossible to please that Omniscient and Almighty Being to whom all hearts are open and from whom no secrets are hid. Still it ought to be ever present to our minds that the circumstances of Christians in the present day bear scarcely any resemblance to those of the early converts; and especially that we cannot be justified in the same sense in which they were justified or received the pardon of their past sins; and therefore, that although faith alone qualified them for enter-

ing into the church, it will not qualify us for entering into the kingdom of heaven.

Justifying faith, therefore, as far as we are concerned, is that faith which worketh by love and restrains a man from sin, exciting in him a wholesome fear of God's law, and an earnest desire of conformity to the Divine image. For this great purpose mere belief will not avail. St Paul himself assures us that there is a faith which is useless, and St James declares that a man may believe and yet perish. "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also: Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

It has been well remarked, that the proposition *we are justified by faith* means not that we are justified by the mere possession of belief, but by the proper action of that belief upon our heart and conduct. Nothing is more common than to

speak of a man's being saved by his skill, his presence of mind, his courage ; when we really mean, not that the man was saved by the mere possession of these qualities, but by the line of conduct which they enabled him to pursue. Since, then, it is clear that the proper action of faith is such a use of the means of grace as will enable us to perfect holiness in the fear of God ; since it is clear from St James that faith alone does not justify, and from St Paul that without charity it is unprofitable, we must conclude that faith, or a belief of the truths of the Gospel, justifies not by its mere *existence*, but by its *action* on the heart and conduct.*

On this point it is enough to have stated the doctrine generally without attempting to obviate the peculiar objections which might be urged against it by those divines who, from not attending to the special meaning of St Paul's language, ascribe the *final* justification of the human being

* For this and some other excellent observations on the same subject, see the work of Mr Terrot already quoted, pp. 32—35.

to faith abstractedly considered. Instead of pursuing the phantoms which have been raised in this dark recess of systematic theology, I shall go on, in the third place, to point out the practical mistakes which have arisen from neglecting the distinction just alluded to ; that is, from applying to Christians, in our days, certain expressions which had an exclusive reference to the condition of those who became converts to the Gospel under the eyes of the Apostles themselves.

III. Of these errors there is none which has recently created a greater sensation among a certain class of minor theologians than the doctrine of *universal pardon*, as distinguished from the more rational and Scriptural tenet of universal redemption. The patrons of that silly speculation proceed on the ground that the Apostles addressed the Christians of their own times as persons all of whom were justified, washed from their former pollutions, pardoned, admitted into a state of salvation, and even as being actually saved. It is true that such language was

used by the inspired writers ; and, moreover, that every individual who professed to believe in Christ and was baptized was considered as having obtained the pardon of his sins ; as being so far sanctified as to be made a member of the visible body of the Redeemer ; and as constituted an heir through hope of a happy immortality. But it is manifest, at the same time, that the pardon mentioned or implied in the writings of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, respected those transgressions only which had been committed prior to conversion ; and that, consequently, the eternal welfare of every individual Christian was not secured by that act of grace, but depended upon his future conduct in his new relationship to God under the Gospel covenant. At that particular period, therefore, the whole church of Christ might be regarded as *pardoned*, and yet not assured of everlasting salvation. The amnesty was general, but it was entirely retrospective. It placed every one who was the object of it in a state of safety for the time, but it gave no security for the future. The benefit, indeed, whatever

might be its precise value, was extended alike to all, even to whole societies and nations; for the converts at large were necessarily regarded according to their common profession, their faith and their baptism, which alone could be known to the Apostles, and not according to their sincerity and personal holiness, which could not be known even to those inspired servants of the Lord. To be received into the communion of Christ's visible body, and to obtain pardon of sins, were expressions which soon became synonymous; and they were accordingly used in support of a doctrine which, in no long period, was exposed to a gross abuse. So difficult is it to shut up men in the faith, even when the ministry of reconciliation is performed by an Apostle!*

* Every reader knows how soon and how deeply some of the pagan converts erred in their notions of baptism. "This sacrament," says Gibbon, "was supposed to contain a full and absolute expiation of sin; and the soul was instantly restored to its original purity, and entitled to the promise of eternal salvation. Among the proselytes of Christianity, there were many who judged it imprudent to precipitate a salutary rite which could not be repeated; to throw away an inestimable

Nothing is more certain, however, than that the expressions used by St Paul in reference to baptized proselytes, do not describe our condition at the present day ; and hence it is obvious that the opinions now so sedulously propagated respecting universal pardon originate in ignorance of primitive doctrines and ancient modes of speech. At no epoch of his life, between infancy and the hour of dissolution, is any man warranted by a general principle of the Gospel to assert that all his actual sins are pardoned by God, and that nothing remains to complete the certainty of his salvation, except the belief that he is already placed beyond the reach of danger.

Another evil arising from the practice of applying to Christians in modern times expressions which were suggested by the peculiar situation of the original members of the Church, appears in

privilege which could never be recovered. The pride of Constantine, who refused the privileges of a catechumen cannot easily be explained or excused ; but the delay of his baptism may be justified by the maxims and the practice of ecclesiastical antiquity.”—*Decline and Fall*, vol. iii. p. 272.

the aversion entertained by a large class of our countrymen to the sound Scriptural doctrine which attaches conditions to salvation. Such persons repeat in our ears, even to satiety, that we are justified freely,—that we are saved by grace, and that not of ourselves ; it is the gift of God : not of works, lest any man should boast. Now, in reply to such arguments, let it be stated once more, that the meritorious cause of salvation is unquestionably the death of Christ, and that so far it is a free gift,—the gift of God, which no human being could either merit or purchase. But one Apostle tells us, that we are saved by faith, while another assures us, that if faith be not accompanied with works it is useless,—it is dead, being alone : hence divines have been in the habit of saying that the atonement made by the Redeemer is the efficient cause of human salvation, and that faith and obedience are the conditions upon which it is granted to individuals.

Certain squeamish preachers, however, began their opposition to this plain doctrine by taking offence at works, that is, a man's words and ac-

tions, being held even as a condition of salvation ; and the only religious value they allowed to holiness, temperance, brotherly-kindness, and charity, was confined to the fact that such graces afford evidence of the existence of faith. According to this hypothesis, faith was made the sole condition upon which Almighty God extends to individuals the benefits of the Christian mediation ; namely, the pardon of sin, and the blessing of eternal life. But this refinement is not now deemed sufficient. It has been discovered, that, if even faith be held as a condition of salvation, the Gospel is not completely gratuitous ; for if faith must be presented unto God when we ask to be saved, we are making a bargain for heaven, as much as we should do were we to offer our good works, our prayers, and our alms, as the purchase-money at the footstool of the Eternal. According to the most modern system, therefore, all conditions are discarded ; faith and good works are equally thrown into the background ; and all that is required of man, as the recipient of salvation, is a hearty belief that the gift has been already bestowed. We are told

by one writer, that “ God neither loves nor pardons us on account of our belief in his testimony ; but the belief of his love, and of the gift which his love has bestowed, will give a confidence that we are dearly welcome to him,—that we are his accepted ones,—his adopted children. Pardon exists before the faith, and only becomes a matter of *personal feeling* in consequence of being believed. And whilst we do not know this, or are insensible to it, we are not justified.”

As far as any meaning can be drawn from such a statement, we are to conclude that a man is to judge of his spiritual condition, not by any correspondence between his character and the rules of God's law, but by the ardour of his feelings, the intensity of his affections, and the firmness of his assurance. This is a very startling sort of theology, and which cannot fail to unhinge the minds of weak persons, who trust less to the plain truths of the Bible than to the exposition which is given of them by bold theorists. In former times it was customary to teach, that, if a man did not believe and act like a Christian, he could

not enter into the kingdom of God. It was generally held, that if Christ and his Apostles impressed any one truth with greater emphasis than another, it was that the favour of God, reconciled through the mediation of the cross, is to be obtained by reposing faith in his Gospel, and by walking in his commandments ; and it was thought that the duty of man consists not only in his loving God, but in his fearing him, imploring forgiveness, and soliciting mercy. These plain maxims are now attacked by a contemptible species of sophistry, drawn from a perversion of the Apostolical language.

I cannot better expose the absurdity and danger of rejecting faith and obedience as conditions of salvation, than by quoting a passage from the celebrated Mr Hall, one of the ablest preachers and most ardent Christians of the present day. —“ For presuming,” says he, “ to speak of conditions of salvation, the author is accused of employing anti-evangelical language, and suspicions of his orthodoxy are pretty loudly insinuated. When the term *conditions* of salvation, or words

of similar import, are employed, he wishes it once for all to be understood, that he utterly disclaims the notion of *meritorious* conditions, and that he intends by that term only what is necessary in the established order of things, a *sine qua non*, that without which another thing cannot possibly take place. When thus defined, to deny that there are conditions of salvation, is not merely to approach to Antinomianism; it is to fall into the gulf. It is nothing less than a repeal of all the sanctions of revelation, of all the principles of moral government: Let the idea of conditional salvation, in the sense already explained, be steadily rejected along with the terms, and the patrons of the worst of heresies will have nothing further to demand. That repentance, faith, and their fruits in a holy life, supposing life to be continued, are essential pre-requisites to eternal happiness, is a doctrine inscribed as with a sunbeam in every page of revelation; and must we, in deference to the propagators of an epidemic pestilence, be bound to express, by obscure and feeble circumlocutions, a truth which one word will con-

vey, especially when that word, or others of a precisely similar meaning, has been current in the productions of unquestionable orthodoxy and piety in every age? The author is at a loss to conceive on what principle, or for what reason, dangerous concessions are due to Antinomianism; that thick-skinned monster of the ooze and mire, which no weapon can pierce, no discipline can tame. While this heresy is making rapid strides through the land, and has already convulsed and disorganized so many of our churches, it is not the season for half-measures; danger is to be repelled by intrepid resistance, by stern defiance, not by compliances and concessions: it is to be opposed, if opposed successfully, by a return to the wholesome dialect of purer times. Such is the intimate alliance between words and things, that the solicitude with which the term *condition* and others of similar import have been avoided by some excellent men, has contributed more than a little to the growth of this wide-spreading pestilence. As almost every age of the Church is marked by its appropriate visitation of error, so little penetration

is requisite to perceive, that Antinomianism is the epidemic malady of the present, and that it is an evil of gigantic size and deadly malignity. It is qualified for mischief by the very properties which might seem to render it only an object of contempt,—its vulgarity of conception, its paucity of ideas, its determined hostility to taste, science, and letters. It includes within a compass which every head can contain, and every tongue can utter, a system which cancels every moral tie, consigns the whole human race to the extremes of presumption or despair, erects religion on the ruins of morality, and imparts to the dregs of stupidity all the powers of the most active poison. The author will ever feel himself honoured by whatever censures he may incur through his determined opposition to such a system.”

A third evil, which has arisen from the practice of applying to our times descriptions and exhortations suggested by the peculiar situation of the early Christians, appears in the undue value attached by certain theoretical divines to mere *belief* in the Gospel, viewed as the means or the in-

strument of salvation. The main object of the apostolical labours was to gain converts to the religion of the Redeemer ; and hence the style of teaching adopted by the first ministers of our holy faith had respect to the evidence upon which Christianity was founded, and to the testimony of its divine origin, as distinguished from all other systems. The first step, in such circumstances, was to secure attention to the grounds of belief ; and we find, accordingly, that the two propositions to believe in Christ, and to be saved by him, were in those days equivalent in their import. When, for example, a Roman or a Greek, in the hour of remorse for his sins, exclaimed,—“ What shall I do to be saved ?” the answer was very properly given, “ believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved ;”—that is, become a Christian, and thou shalt thereby obtain pardon of sin and the hope of everlasting life. To persons who had not yet heard of our Lord as the Saviour of sinners, the Apostles very naturally addressed themselves by telling them who he was, and what were the objects of his descent from heaven to

dwell among men ; and, before anything farther could be done, it was necessary that these important facts should be received as the foundation alike of faith and of practice.

Hence you will see the reason, why so much stress is laid on belief in the first lessons of those divine missionaries, and why so little is said at the first interview about good works or moral conduct. When a minister of Christ, at that early period, entreated a man to believe, he, in fact, exhorted him to lay aside his old religion and to become a Christian ; and the word faith, accordingly, became synonymous with conversion from the rites of heathenism to the pure ordinances of the Gospel ; the act of belief being very properly viewed as the basis of the Christian character, and of all the obedience and holiness which were expected to follow. In short, the Apostles first endeavoured to make the Pagan believe the message with which they were charged, and then they told him, that to his faith he must add virtue, temperance, knowledge, brotherly-kindness, and charity, those graces which adorn and bless the society of mankind.

But if the same inspired teachers were to reappear amongst those who already profess to believe in Christ, and have been baptized in his name, and were any one to ask them, in the words of the Macedonian jailor,—“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” they would not, in our country, give the answer which they pronounced at Philippi, and say,—“believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Their exhortation, in our case, would be altogether different. They would instruct us, if we hoped for the favour of God, to throw aside all vicious habits and to reform the life, to cut off the right hand which offended, to pluck out the evil eye, and to deny ourselves in all things which are either ungodly or inexpedient. What were the great preliminaries in their days,—belief and baptism,—have been already observed by us; for which reason they would proceed to the second stage at once, and repeat to us the faithful saying and the things which ought to be affirmed constantly, that they who have believed in God,—who have openly avowed their profession

as members of the mystical body of the Redeemer, —should be careful to maintain good works.

Those who neglect the change of circumstances here alluded to, and forget that the ministry of the Apostles was almost entirely confined to a class of men who had never heard of Christ, and who were in a state of the grossest ignorance and superstition, think it their duty to address us at the present day, exactly as if we were still unconverted Pagans ; and to urge upon us the necessity of believing in the Redeemer, and of having faith in him, precisely as if we were hearing of that blessed Person for the first time, and had still to declare our acceptance of him as the Mediator between God and man. It is indeed to be much deplored that pious men, who are desirous to take St Paul for their pattern, should pay so little regard to the peculiarity of the circumstances in which that Apostle was called upon to exercise his ministry ; and merely because he preached faith or belief to tribes of men who had then everything to learn, they should think it their duty to insist almost exclusively on the same topic, in the present age, in

the hearing of people, too, who, from their infancy, have been members of the church of Christ, and who profess, at least, to believe all that the Scriptures reveal concerning the Author and the objects of their faith. They remind us, that the great Apostle of the Gentiles made belief the sole condition upon which eternal life is to be obtained, saying,—“ Believe in the Lord and thou shalt be saved ;”—forgetting that the individual to whom St Paul addressed those words was a heathen who did not believe in the Redeemer, who had yet to become a Christian, and to be baptized into a new faith, of which he did not know even the first principles. I need not say more upon this part of the subject, because every one must perceive the distinction upon which the argument rests, as also the mistake into which those persons have fallen who make no allowance for the change of times and circumstances, and think that they teach more wisely than others, because they address Christians of the present age in language which St Paul used to the unconverted heathen nearly eighteen hundred years ago.

As connected in some degree with this view of the subject, we may remark, that the argument which the same Apostle urged against the efficacy of works, whether legal or ceremonial, regarded as the *ground of justification* before God, has been perverted so far as to produce, in certain systems of divinity, a theoretical depreciation of moral conduct at large. The works which St Paul denounced, as being of no avail for procuring the pardon of sin, were either those which the priest and Levite performed in the temple, or such as the Pagan philosopher thought himself capable of achieving in the pursuit of his "wisdom ;" whereas the works which the modern preacher is sometimes heard to vilify, and to place on the same footing with the sacrifices and ablutions of the ancient law, are acts of justice, truth, benevolence, and mercy, the very stay and support of social life. I do not venture to insinuate that any man, however blinded by theory or corrupted by system, will directly and positively deny the importance of virtue ; but there are thousands who think that they would fail to preach the

Gospel, did they not studiously throw good works into the shade ; represent them as of no importance in determining the great question of eternal life or death ; and, in fact, do all in their power to weaken the force of our Saviour's declaration, that as we sow here so shall we reap hereafter. From this unhappy perversion of apostolical language, it has become extremely unpopular to lay any stress upon practical righteousness. The divine who wishes to be thought sound in the faith must refrain from hazarding the unacceptable doctrine, that Christian obedience and holiness are essentially connected with our final justification, although our blessed Saviour has himself assured us, that when he shall come at the last day to summon the quick and the dead to judgment, he will render to every man according to his works.

The language and the reasoning of St Paul on this head are perfectly intelligible when restricted to the people to whom his several Epistles are addressed, and to the opinions which, in their particular case, he meant to correct or to establish. But neither his language nor his reasoning ap-

plies to Christians in these times, who, whatever else may be their mistakes in matters of religion, do not attempt to rest the plea of their justification on works of law, either ritual or moral. Those, therefore, who adopt his argument without advert-
ing to the singular situation of the primitive believers, are found indeed to use his words, while they grossly misapply his conclusions, and thereby direct the strength of his powerful and enlightened mind to weaken the obligation of a principle which he never ceased to confirm and to recommend.

It is unquestionably from the depth of this vulgar error that Antinomianism—that monster of the ooze and mire which is more to be dreaded than the seven-headed prodigy of apocalyptic vision—threatens ever and anon to rise up amongst us and to dissolve all the bonds of practical piety. To the same source may be traced the kindred heresy which, confounding the pardon or justification conferred upon the primitive converts with the final justification which will be pronounced in favour of those who shall be placed on the right

hand at the day of judgment, maintains that all mankind at the present day, however sinful and impenitent, are already actually pardoned by the Almighty Judge, and require no other qualification for heaven than the belief of their accepted state.

There was a time, as I have already stated, when the whole Christian world might have been described as pardoned, but not finally saved. That predicament, however, ceased to exist with the peculiar situation of the first members of the church,—the “elect and justified” of the Apostolic age.

All these mistakes have originated in the neglect of the very obvious distinction, which I am now endeavouring to establish, between the circumstances of the early Christians who were either converts from paganism or from the ritual of Moses, and the condition of the church of Christ in our own times. The species of justification which accompanied faith in the Gospel at the former period is not conferred on believers in the present day, except, perhaps, in that figurative and modified sense in which infants are said to be justified in

baptism. In this limited acceptation of the term indeed, all who have been admitted into the church by means of the initiatory rite now mentioned, were justified or pardoned, so far as we can consider pardon applicable to the penal effects of the first transgression ; but as to sins committed after baptism, being in fact the guilt and impurity which deform the actual condition of human life, there is no justification which is not founded upon repentance, obedience, and holiness. For accomplishing these, the system of Christianity provides most ample means and motives, in the ministry of the word and sacraments, and in that more powerful aid which operates through these external instruments ; and which, when sincerely asked and faithfully employed, never fails to enable the penitent sinner to work out his salvation in the love and fear of God.

The doctrine of justification by faith, like the corresponding tenet of election, has, at various periods, been found liable to much abuse, and will at all times, when viewed through a false medium, produce an unfavourable effect on the religious

character. In the ordinary state of things, it is true, we find that common sense and respect for the opinion of the world are generally sufficient to counteract the tendency of the most pernicious doctrines. But it is obvious, that if a man could once prevail on himself to believe in earnest that his conduct is altogether a matter of indifference in the eye of the Great Judge, and that his salvation is quite independent of his words and actions, he would instantly lay aside all restraint upon his appetites, and work all uncleanness with greediness. But no man, fortunately, as long as his intellect remains unimpaired, can believe in earnest that his behaviour here is not closely connected with his eternal welfare hereafter. Notwithstanding all the bewildering sophistry of a theological creed, he feels the force of that great evangelical truth, that God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thought, and will recompense every man at the last according to the doings of his hands and the devices of his heart.

In proportion, however, as such doctrines are believed, the effect must be bad on the practical

character, and particularly among the lower class of society, where any defect in religious motives is not so easily supplied from education, or from those enlightened views of social duty and honourable feeling which usually check the absurdities of theological speculation. The kind of doctrine with which the common people of this country are the most delighted, and which alone they are found to encourage, is not perhaps the best fitted to make them strict lovers of truth, of sincerity, and honesty ; because it throws in such a mass of obscure discussion between the practical conduct and the final awards of Divine justice, that an ignorant person has much difficulty in connecting the one with the other, or in being satisfied that the reaping in the eternal world depends entirely and exclusively upon the sowing in the world which now is. Were our popular doctrines more simple than they usually are, there is reason to believe that the people around us would be more true and just in all their dealings, more observant of truth and candour, and not less desirous to be pure within, than to have a good appearance and

reputation without. I repeat, then, that the doctrines founded upon a misapprehension of St Paul's language are far from being safe, nay, that they are pernicious in a very high degree ; and it is only because they are not heartily and consistently followed out,—because they contradict our natural impressions of equity and common sense,—because they represent the ways and laws of God as incompatible either with wisdom or goodness,—because, in short, they cannot obtain a ready admittance into a sound mind and gain its confidence,—that their bad effects are not most deeply felt and deplored throughout the whole Christian world.

There is another cause for that theoretical disparagement of morality, which appears with so much prominence in some of our theological systems, and which, although it does not properly belong to the subject now before us, is not altogether undeserving of notice. I allude to the opposition made by many of the Reformers to the erroneous views entertained by the church of Rome in respect to justification ; in the course of

which they allowed themselves to be carried by the impulse of their zeal to the use of language very liable to be misunderstood, and which, in fact, has since been more than occasionally perverted. Because the Popish doctor ascribed merit to good works, and promised a reward for them in heaven, some Protestants positively denied that good works could have any existence ; that merit could belong either to the motive or to the action in any part of human conduct ; or that any one deed possessing moral worth could possibly be performed by the most virtuous and enlightened man on the face of the earth.

Before the Reformation, the priest made it his study to class and estimate both virtues and vices, measuring out to each the share of merit, or the degree of blame, which respectively belonged to them ; and, by balancing the one against the other, according to the situation of the parties concerned, he could take upon himself to decide how much was still wanting to qualify a man for entering into the kingdom of heaven. Since the Reformation, on the contrary, the Protestant divine

has not unfrequently employed himself in declaiming against all distinction whatever in human actions, if viewed in the light of merit or demerit, or as affecting the ultimate condition of the soul. The Roman Catholic had his sins divided into venial and mortal ; and his good works were such as either merely fulfilled his duty, or entitled him to expect for the performance of them some degree of favour in the sight of Heaven. But the more rigid of his opponents, on the other hand, by making all sins deserving of everlasting punishment, have rendered all sins equally great ; and, by refusing all merit to good actions, have made all virtues equally useless, and thus, in fact, have confounded virtue and vice together, so far, at least, as we regard their influence upon our future and eternal destination.

To a person who reads with attention the four Gospels, especially the discourses of our Saviour therein recorded, and then compares the rules of human duty and the laws which are to regulate the future judgment of the quick and dead, with the tenets held by many expounders of the Chris-

tian faith at the present day in relation to these important subjects, it must appear extremely difficult to reconcile the plain text with the abstruse commentary. But it is manifest, that much of what is obscure, and apparently inconsistent in modern creeds, might be removed by interpreting the language of Scripture with a strict reference to the times in which it was used, and to the opinions on religious topics which at that period prevailed, both among Jews and Gentiles. The remainder may be attributed to the long and ardent contest on doctrinal points, which was carried on between the Roman Catholics and Protestants; in the course of which, errors on the one side generally produced errors on the other, as each party thought themselves safe if they withdrew as far as possible from the positions occupied by their antagonists. These two maxims will enable the theological student to clear away from his path many of the obstacles which impede his progress towards the attainment of evangelical truth.

I have purposely avoided all the intricacies of the discussion which respects a *first* and a *second*

justification, because I have satisfied myself that all the difficulty which besets the question arises from the varying import of the terms, when applied to the primitive Christians upon their admission into the church, and when used in reference to the last sentence at the great day of judgment. In both cases, indeed, the word justification may be held to denote acquittal ; but it is obvious that the state in which the judicial determination will place good men, at the last day, bears very little resemblance to the mere condition of privilege and of hope, which constituted or resulted from the pardon bestowed upon the early converts to our faith. In this case, as in many others, the Protestant has been carried towards one extreme by endeavouring to avoid the errors with which he charges the Roman Catholic, who had unquestionably deviated too far in an opposite direction. The study of theology is thus rendered a history of human prejudice and passion ; presenting no greater variety than is produced by the periodical return of the same absurdities, modified, perhaps, by the circumstances under which they reappear,

or recommended for a moment by a more ardent zeal, or by greater taste and learning.

There is, no doubt, a sufficient ground for the distinction now mentioned between justification on earth and that final justification which is to award the blessedness of heaven. On this point every reader will coincide in the opinion given by a learned divine in the following terms :—“ Justification, in the sense in which the members of the church of Corinth are all said to have been justified, has been very generally called our *first* justification, to distinguish it from the *final* justification of those who shall be acquitted at the tribunal of Christ, when the whole human race shall be arraigned before him. The notion of the *first* and second or *final* justification seems to have been disliked by Bishop Bull ; and it is, perhaps, to be wished that our translators had rendered the Greek words differently, when they relate to the admission of members into the Christian church, and when they mean the acquittal of those, who, at the general judgment, shall be set on the right hand of the Sovereign Judge. The distinction,

however, has been admitted, and appears to have been perfectly understood by the compilers of our articles; for, if they had admitted of no other justification than that which shall be finally pronounced at the general judgment, they could not have said, as they do in the twelfth article, that ‘good works, pleasing to God, are the fruits of faith, and *follow after justification*; for, after our *final* justification, our good works cannot possibly be the fruits of *faith*, which shall then be swallowed up in vision.’ ”*

Practically speaking, however, it is with the second or final justification that Christians of the present age are concerned; and the way thereto will be found neither in the deeds of the ritual law, nor in the practice of Pagan virtue, but by adding to a sincere belief in the Gospel, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity.

* Directions for the Study of Theology.

*The Historical Evidence for the Apostolical
Institution of Episcopacy :*

A SERMON,

PREACHED at STIRLING, on SUNDAY, the 7th March, 1830,

AT THE CONSECRATION OF

THE RIGHT REV. JAMES WALKER, D.D.

TO THE OFFICE OF A BISHOP IN THE SCOTTISH
EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

and the people have been so long and so long
in the hands of the few, that they have
become so much accustomed to it, that they
will not suffer it to be taken away from them
without a great deal of trouble and expense.
The history of the constitution for the last
century is a history of the struggle between
the few and the many.

A SERMON
PREACHED AT THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY, LONDON,
ON SUNDAY, THE 10TH OF MARCH, 1850.
BY THE REV. JAMES WALKER, D.D.

AT THE CONSTITUTION OF

THE RIGHT REV. JAMES WALKER, D.D.

TO THE OFFICE OF A BISHOP IN THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND, AND TO THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY, LONDON.

EVERY ONE OF US HAS A RIGHT TO
THE HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTION.

THE HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTION

THE HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTION

THE HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTION

THE HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTION

THE HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTION

TO THE RIGHT REVEREND

JAMES WALKER, D.D. F.R.S.E.,

WHOSE ELEVATION TO THE EPISCOPATE

HAS BEEN VIEWED WITH UNMINGLED SATISFACTION

BY ALL THE CLERGY AND LAITY OF

THE SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL COMMUNION,

THIS DISCOURSE,

PREACHED AT HIS CONSECRATION,

IS INSCRIBED WITH

EVERY FEELING OF RESPECT, AFFECTION, AND ESTEEM,

BY HIS FAITHFUL SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

TO THE RIGHT REVEREND

JAMES WALKER D.D. F.R.S.E.

WHOSE ELECTION TO THE BISHOPRIC

HAS BEEN VIEWED WITH UNMIXED SATISFACTION

BY ALL THE CLERGY AND LAITY OF

THE SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL COMMUNION

THIS DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT HIS CONSECRATION

IS PRESENTED WITH

THE MOST PERFECT OF DESIRES, AFFECTION AND ESTEEM

BY THE BISHOP OF ABERDEEN

JOHN B. THE AUTHOR

AND IN WITNESS WHEREOF

CHRISTIAN FAITHFULNESS

THE SIGNATURE

DISCOURSE IV.

ON THE APOSTOLICAL INSTITUTION OF EPISCOPACY.

1 TIMOTHY iii. 14, 15. *These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly ; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God.*

ASSUMING that the church is a regular society, instituted by the Redeemer for conveying to mankind the benefit of his salvation, I shall endeavour, in this discourse, to ascertain from Scripture, as well as from the writings of the earliest Christian Fathers, what was the original form of that society ; and hence to derive the means of

determining whether the ecclesiastical constitution, maintained by Episcopalians in the present day, possesses the apostolical authority which has usually been claimed for it.

On such a subject, the main difficulty which a preacher has to encounter, is the necessity of condensing within narrow limits a variety of statements, drawn from different sources, which lose much of their force by being separated from the narrative in which they are found embodied, and by being expressed in terms which are no longer familiar to the common reader. To facilitate, therefore, the comprehension of what is about to be submitted to your judgments on this important inquiry, I will divide my sermon into three heads, as follows :—Endeavouring to prove,

In the *first* place, that in the time of the Apostles there existed in the Church three distinct orders of clergymen, besides those temporary office-bearers whose services and peculiar gifts passed away with the special circumstances which had rendered them necessary ;

And, in the *second* place, that the same three

orders were continued in the church in the age immediately succeeding that of the Apostles, and have been perpetuated until the present day.

In the *third* place, we will examine into the principal authorities derived from such ancient records as have been considered hostile to the claims of episcopacy as an apostolical institution, and estimate with candour and impartiality the warrant which they have been thought to afford for a different system of ecclesiastical polity.

I. Before I proceed to the argument contained in the first head, it will be necessary to explain the terms in which the question at issue is expressed, and thereby to unfold the proper and original meaning of the three words, Bishop, Presbyter, and Deacon.

The Greek word, which in the New Testament is translated Bishop, literally signifies a superintendent or overseer, and is, by ancient authors, applied indiscriminately to civil, to ecclesiastical, and even to military officers. Hence it is obvious, that, as this term was at first used in its

most general and unrestricted sense, a considerable degree of ambiguity must attend its application wherever its import is not clearly determined either by the subject itself, or by the particular definitions of the several authors who employ it. It is, I need not add, from this source that the chief difficulty arises in all inquiries respecting the constitution of the primitive Church ; for, as a Bishop might be merely the overseer of a congregation, as well as the superintendent of a body of inferior clergymen, a wide field is opened up for controversy in regard to the actual usage of the first Christians, immediately after they had ceased to be guided by Divine inspiration. In this case, as in all others of a similar nature, the meaning of the term must be fixed by a reference to the practice of that period in which it was first used as an ordinary expression in ecclesiastical language ; and it is by following this method that we will endeavour to define its proper signification in the writings of the most ancient Fathers of the Christian Church.

The word Presbyter, as its original import is

still more comprehensive than that of the former, is also still more ambiguous, and open to a greater variety of acceptations. It literally denotes a man advanced in years, and is, for that reason, usually translated Elder. But as, in ancient times, all honours and offices were conferred upon persons of experience, the term descriptive of an elderly man came, in the ordinary course of human speech, to be associated with honours and offices of all kinds, and even to be expressive of respect and reverence in general. We find, accordingly, that the Elders of the people in the Old Testament were the Magistrates of the city, or the rulers of the state. In like manner, the Elders or Presbyters of the Church, in the New Testament, were the ministers of the Gospel, including sometimes the highest ranks and orders. Even the Apostles called themselves Presbyters, taking the word in its widest acceptation ; for it was not until the Church passed under the ordinary government of uninspired men, that the terms Bishop and Presbyter were clothed with a more precise and specific meaning. Suffice it to

state, in the meantime, that, throughout the New Testament, the word Elder signifies an ordained clergyman, who ministered in the word and sacraments ; and nowhere in that portion of sacred Scripture does it denote a layman invested with a subordinate species of ecclesiastical authority.—

“ Is there any sick among you, let him send for the Elders of the church, and let them pray over him,” is a precept which in this part of the kingdom is very liable to be misunderstood ; and it is only where the proper meaning of the word Elder or Presbyter is received, that the advice of St James can be appreciated according to its true and primitive signification.

The term Deacon, you are all aware, means a servant or assistant, and was applied to the third or lowest order of ministers, whose office appears to have varied at different times, but who, in the earliest age of the Church, were commissioned to baptize, to preach, and to assist in the administration of the Lord's Supper. This expression, like the two others, had a general as well as a more special meaning ; and we accordingly find it used

in the New Testament in relation to the ministry of the Apostles, and even of the blessed Redeemer himself. In the process of a short time, however, it was confined exclusively to the third order of ministers, and was no longer subject to any other ambiguity than that which has ever attended human language, even in its most refined and intellectual forms.

You may already, then, be prepared to hear, that no conclusive argument for any particular model of ecclesiastical polity can be drawn from the literal meaning of the words in which the official characters and ministerial duties of the different orders of clergymen were described in the days of the Apostles. The language of church-history was not yet formed; and this remark applies not only to the three terms which have already passed under our review, but also to numerous other expressions, which, though they had, at the period just mentioned, a general and indefinite import, were soon afterwards appropriated to the uses of religion, and employed in a precise and restricted signification. For example, the word Baptism, at

the commencement of the Gospel era, meant, most commonly, nothing more sacred than ordinary washing. According to this view, we are told by St Mark, that there “are many things which the Pharisees have received to hold, as the *baptism* of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, and tables.” —“And when they come from the market,” says the same inspired writer, “except they *baptize*, they eat not.” In like manner, the Greek word which signifies church,—and which, in the writings even of the earliest ecclesiastical historians, is restricted to that acceptation,—meant, in the time of the Apostles, any meeting whatsoever; an assembly of pious Christians convened to worship God, or a riotous multitude gathered together for sedition and violence. For instance, in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts, where the inspired annalist gives an account of a tumult at Ephesus, which was finally suppressed by one of the magistrates, we are told, in our common version, that “he dismissed the assembly.” Now, every scholar knows, that the noun which is here translated *assembly* is the very same which in

other places of the New Testament is rendered church; not having as yet been limited in its meaning, nor exclusively applied to express a Christian idea.

I mention these things, which may perhaps appear trifling, to show you the value of any argument which rests entirely upon the application of a word in its largest signification, and before it had been appropriated by the usage of ecclesiastical writers to a peculiar and specific object. What, for example, would you think of the wisdom and candour of a controversialist, who should maintain that the term Baptism, in the writings of Ignatius, Chrysostom, or Tertullian, could not mean the Christian ordinance of initiation, because we find the same term applied by St Mark to denote the washing of cups and pots? Or what confidence could you have in the conclusions of a logician, who should insist that the Greek word which we translate church, could not, in the writings of the second century, mean exclusively a meeting of Christians assembled for public worship, because we find it used by the inspired au-

thor of the book of Acts, in reference to an unruly multitude, who wished to tear an Apostle in pieces !*

But however unreasonable this method of expounding an ancient record may appear to you, it has nevertheless been made the principal ground on which arguments against the Apostolical institution of episcopacy have been supported. The word Bishop, it is urged, signifies an overseer in general, and has even been applied by St Paul to the presbyterial, or second order of clergymen ; whence it is maintained, that, in the writings of those holy men who immediately succeeded the Apostles, it must have the same extensive unrestricted meaning, and cannot justly be limited to an order of ministers higher than that of the Presbyter. But, while we readily admit that the words Bishop and Presbyter are used with great latitude in the Apostolical writings, and even that they are applied indiscriminately to the second order of clergymen, we deny the inference

* See Note F in Appendix.

which has been drawn from this fact, namely, that, in the first age of the church,—in the days, I mean, of Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp,—the power and offices of the Bishop and Presbyter were the same. Nothing, indeed, could be more fallacious than an argument founded upon such verbal niceties; for we find St Paul calling himself a Deacon, and St Peter and St John applying to themselves the name of Presbyter,—and yet no man of competent understanding will maintain, that the great Apostle of the Gentiles belonged to that class of ministers who were ordained to serve tables, or that the two others, who were commissioned by our Lord himself to found his Church upon earth, possessed not a power and a dignity superior to the office of a Presbyter, in the ordinary acceptation of the word.*

But all historical controversies are most satisfactorily determined by an appeal to facts. It will not be denied, then, that the Apostles ordained at least two orders of clergymen, in subor-

* See Note G in Appendix.

dination to their own higher office, namely, the Presbyter and the Deacon, properly so called. Nor will any one hesitate to admit, that, as long as they lived, the Apostles themselves constituted a third order, who exercised a superintendence over the two other classes of ministers, as well as over the congregations in which these last were wont to officiate. These two points are granted by all writers of every connexion and denomination who have attempted to trace the rise of ecclesiastical polity, or even the general history of the Church of Christ. Some indeed maintain, that the three orders just described were not meant to be continued in the ordinary state of the Christian community. But, that they existed during the lives of the holy Apostles, no author whose works are known to me has ever ventured to call in question.

It has been already remarked, that the Apostles exercised a regular superintendence and control over the churches which they had planted in different parts of Europe and of Asia. It was their constant practice, as recorded by the inspired au-

thor of the book of Acts, to ordain Presbyters to preside over the congregations which they formed from time to time in their progress through the Roman empire ; but they, nevertheless, reserved all those powers of government and order, which, upon their decease, were vested in the episcopal office, and which they themselves, in their latter years, gradually transferred to their uninspired successors in the Church. The Presbyters and Deacons, it is manifest, were intrusted with the care of particular flocks, according as the number of converts increased ; but it is no less certain, that the Apostles continued to charge themselves with the supreme direction both of the clergy and people, and to act as the chief pastors of the several districts, which, by their means, had been gained to the faith of Christ. In a word, besides all the spiritual duties performed by the two inferior orders of the ministry, there was a *care* connected with their high office, which, as St Paul assures us, came upon them daily, and of which, in the earlier part of their lives at least, they answered all the claims in person

If, in this respect, we direct our attention to the conduct of the Apostle just named, we shall find that he considered himself entitled not only to teach and admonish, but also to reprove, to rebuke, and even to inflict still more weighty censures. His epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians, for example, bear evidence throughout, not less clearly to his anxiety for their religious improvement, than to the authority which, as their ruler in the Lord, he openly assumed, in all questions of faith or morals. To the Philippians, in like manner with their Bishops and Deacons, he writes in the same tone of kindness but of marked superiority; desiring them to do all things without murmuring and disputings, to beware of erroneous teachers, and to follow the example with which he himself had supplied them. Recalling to their recollection that they had always obeyed, not as in his presence only, but even much more in his absence, he exhorts them to persevere in their Christian labours. In the exercise of the same Apostolical power, he sent from Miletus to Ephesus, and called the Presbyters of the church,

when he delivered to them the following impressive exhortation :—“ Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”*

It cannot, therefore, admit of any doubt, that St Paul exercised the office of superintendent in respect to the ministers, as well as to the several congregations under their charge. We may be justified, too, in drawing the same conclusion in regard to the power of conferring holy orders ; for it is expressly stated, that this Apostle, with his brother Barnabas, ordained Presbyters in every church.† In the first instance, this autho-

* There appears to be something particular in the structure of this sentence—Προσέχετε ὅυν ἑαυτοῖς, καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ ἐν ᾧ ὑμεῖς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκοποῦς, κ. τ. λ. Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock *in* the which the Holy Ghost hath made you Bishops or Overseers. If the Apostle had regarded the Ephesian Presbyters as chief pastors of the flock, would he not have used the preposition ἐπὶ, instead of ἐν—τῷ ποιμνίῳ ἐφ' ᾧ ?

† Acts xiv. 23.

ritative act, it is obvious, must have been performed by the hands of these holy men alone, and without the concurrence of any subordinate class of ecclesiastical persons ; although it would appear, that afterwards, in places where a body of Presbyters was already established, the consent of the brotherhood was expressed, as it still is in all episcopal churches, by their joining with the chief minister in the laying on of hands. But, from comparing the two Epistles of St Paul to Timothy, it is plain that this Apostle considered the official authority communicated to his disciple as emanating entirely from himself ; for although, in the former of these compositions, he mentions the laying on of hands by the college of Presbyters, he asserts, in the latter, that the gift of God, or commission to minister in sacred things, was conferred by the “ putting on of his hands.*

But such a recapitulation of facts and reasonings must appear quite superfluous, as no one is disposed to deny that the Apostolic order was su-

* See Note H in Appendix.

perior to the rank of priest and of deacon, or that these last occupied a place in the ministerial offices of the church, under the inspection of their spiritual fathers. It has been generally granted, too, that St Paul conferred upon Timothy and Titus powers very similar to those which were exercised by that Apostle himself; and hence it has been reasonably inferred, that he did not regard the authority with which his order was invested as about to cease with his own life, or with the lives of the other inspired individuals to whom it was first confided. To Timothy, for instance, after specifying the several parts of his commission, he says, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but, if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the house of God."

We are certain that the Apostle never again visited Ephesus, nor took any farther charge of the Presbyters in that city than to send for them, on the occasion already mentioned, to Miletus, where he told them that they should see his face no more. It might therefore be presumed, even

were we destitute of the universal tradition of Christian antiquity, that Timothy would continue to discharge, among the Ephesians, the duties which were committed to him by the Apostle; for it was under the apprehension that he might be compelled to tarry long, that St Paul forwarded the instructions contained in his first letter, the greater part of which respected the public business of the church. But the ecclesiastical history of the earliest age recognizes the episcopate of Timothy, and ranks him among the Bishops, properly so called, who were appointed to this office by the authority of the Apostles. In connexion with this subject, it is worthy of remark, that, in his second epistle, written in the last year of his life, some of the strongest motives, urged by St Paul on the official vigilance of Timothy, are drawn from the circumstance that the term of his own ministry was drawing to a close. “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure

is at hand ;” thereby intimating, it should seem, that the government of that portion of the church was about to devolve permanently on his beloved “ son in the faith.”

The same observations and the same inferences are applicable to the history of Titus, as apostolical missionary to the church of Crete. The authority conveyed by St Paul to both these representatives of his official character, comprehended all the parts of that power and jurisdiction which belong to the episcopal order. They were commissioned, for example, to ordain Presbyters and Deacons, to censure the bad and to reward the good, and even to distribute a suitable maintenance to the different labourers in the spiritual husbandry of the church. To Timothy, the Apostle says, “ I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies. Let the Presbyters that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially

they who labour in the word and doctrine. Against a Presbyter receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins." To Titus also he says, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain Presbyters in every city, as I had appointed thee." Then he proceeds to describe the character of those who alone were fit to be introduced into the ministry ; using nearly the same language which he employs in his first epistle to Timothy.

In the case of these distinguished servants of God, there appears a distinct and unequivocal exercise of Episcopal or Apostolic power ; and this, too, on the part of men, who had received it by direct transmission from human hands. It is of no consequence to our argument, to determine whether Timothy and Titus acted as permanent Bishops of Ephesus and Crete, or whether they mere-

ly discharged the duties confided to them as the coadjutors of St Paul, whose shoulders they relieved of part of his official burden.

When, indeed, we take into consideration the fact, that the Apostle nominated them both towards the close of his life, and also that the duties which he intrusted to them were not of a temporary nature, but belonged to the ordinary condition of the church, there will appear much reason for concluding that he meant their office to be permanent. Had he intended to found a system of ecclesiastical polity different from that upon which he himself had acted, it is extremely probable that he would, in his Epistles, have suggested to them the outlines of the new model. As, however, he did not give the remotest hint that any change of system was contemplated, but, on the contrary, committed to their hands individually the power of ordination and of discipline, with directions for the proper discharge of a trust so extremely important, it is justly to be presumed, that he meant his scheme of church-government to be continued after his departure from this world. It

was, moreover, as I have already stated, the concurrent testimony of early times, that Timothy and Titus did actually continue to occupy the station to which he had raised them, as governors of the Christian communities at Ephesus and Crete; and their names are accordingly placed at the top of those catalogues by which the Episcopal succession in the parent churches has been handed down from age to age.

But, I repeat, it matters not greatly whether we admit or reject the permanency of their appointment as the representatives of St Paul: it is enough that we have been thereby supplied with an unexceptionable instance of the apostolical authority, in its ordinary exercise, passing from the immediate ambassadors of Christ to uninspired men. In the case of Timothy and Titus, we see an order of ministers, higher than that of the Presbyter and the Deacon, in the first step of succession from those illustrious individuals who were directly commissioned, by our blessed Lord himself, to evangelize the world and to lay the foundation of his visible church. In every point

of view, therefore, it is abundantly manifest, that in the days of the Apostles there were three orders of clergymen, corresponding to the Bishop, Priest, and Deacon. But, perhaps, it may be of more importance to the object which we have in hand, to endeavour,

In the *second* place, to collect satisfactory evidence in proof of the fact, that the same three orders of ministers continued in the church in the age immediately succeeding the apostolical period, from which they have been perpetuated until our own times. To accomplish this purpose, we must have recourse at once to the writings of that early epoch, and endeavour to ascertain what was the form of the ecclesiastical body under the first of its uninspired rulers, and, more especially, to discover whether Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons are spoken of, in those ancient records, as the actual ministers of the New Testament.

There are three Fathers who,—as they lived in the days of the Apostles, enjoyed the benefit of their instructions and conversation, were ordained by them to the ministry of the Gospel,

and survived them all by several years,—may be regarded as the bond of connexion between the first and second centuries, and as the medium through which the church passed from the supernatural regimen of inspired men to the ordinary government which was meant to succeed it.

You cannot fail to have anticipated the names of Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp ; the first of whom is mentioned by St Paul as a fellow-labourer, and as having his name written in the Book of Life. This holy man, in his letter to the Corinthians, reminds them that the Apostles, after preaching through divers cities and countries, ordained the best qualified of their converts to be Bishops and Deacons, proving their fitness by the Spirit. Nor was this any new thing, he adds, since long before it was written concerning Bishops and Ministers ; for thus saith the Scripture in a certain place, “ I will appoint their overseers in righteousness, and their deacons in faith.”* It belongs not to us at present to in-

* St Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xlii.

quire, whether this translation of the particular passage in the prophecies of Isaiah be more or less correct than the one in our authorised version ; my object in quoting it being no other than to prove that the apostolical practice had not escaped the notice of St Clement, and hence that the existence of three orders of clergymen in the church in his days must have been regarded in some degree as a Divine institution. With the same view, it is not undeserving of remark, that in pressing upon the Corinthians submission to their pastors, and unanimity among themselves, he reminds them that, in the Jewish Church, the High Priest had his proper services to perform ; that to the priests their particular place was appointed ; and that the Levites also had their allotted ministry to discharge. He makes a similar allusion to the gradations of rank among the officers of an army, and draws from thence the same inference in respect to the constitution of the Church, and the various ecclesiastical offices which it was already understood to comprehend.

But the testimony of Ignatius on this head is

still more precise and particular. You are all aware that this distinguished servant of Christ was appointed Bishop of Antioch about the year of our Lord sixty-nine, and of course while some of the Apostles were still alive ; that he continued about forty years at the head of the Syrian church ; and that at length he suffered martyrdom, sealing with his blood the doctrines which he had professed, and spending his last moments in exhorting the Christian world to steadfastness and perseverance in the true faith. It is asserted by several ancient authors that he was ordained by the hands of St Peter, from whose mouth he had received the elements of divine knowledge. But, whatever may be thought of the evidence upon which this statement has reached our times, there is no doubt that, in imitation of the Apostles, he addressed to the churches several Epistles ; some of which are still preserved to the ecclesiastical historian, by whom they are now regarded as most valuable and authentic records of antiquity.

In writing to the Ephesians, he says, “ I received in the name of God your whole body in

the person of Onesimus, who in the dearest affection is ours, but, according to the flesh, your Bishop; whom I beseech you by Jesus Christ to love, and endeavour, all of you, to be like him. And blessed be God, who hath granted unto you, who are so worthy of him, the advantage of so excellent a Bishop. Wherefore it will become you to co-operate with one another, according to the will of your Bishop, as also you do; for your Presbyters,* so well known and respected in the Church, are fitted as exactly to the Bishop as the strings are to the harp. Wherefore, in your concord and charity, Jesus Christ receives the praise, and every individual among you takes a part in the celebration of his glory."

In his Epistle to the Church of the Magians, he writes,—“Since, then, I have been thought worthy to see you by Damas, your most excellent Bishop, and by your worthy Presbyters,

* In the original *Πρεσβυτεριον*, which may be translated *Presbytery*, or *College of Presbyters*; the assistants and council of the Bishop in primitive times.

Bassus and Apollonius, and by my fellow-servant Sotio, the Deacon, to whom I rejoice, inasmuch as he is subject unto his Bishop as unto the grace of God, and unto the Presbyters as unto the law of Jesus Christ; wherefore also it will become you not to use your Bishop too familiarly on account of his youth, but to yield all reverence to him, as also I perceive that your holy Presbyters do; showing most prudence in submitting themselves to him, or rather not to him, but to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Bishop of us all. It is therefore expedient that you should in all sincerity obey your Bishop, in honour of Him who hath commanded you to do so; because he who does not so, deceives not the Bishop whom he sees so much as he inflicts an insult upon Him who is invisible. For every neglect of this kind reflects not upon man, but upon God, who knows the secrets of our hearts. I exhort you, therefore, that you do everything in a Divine concord; your Bishop presiding in the place of God our Saviour, the Presbyters in the place of the council of Apostles; and your Dea-

cons, most dear to me, being intrusted with the inferior ministry of Jesus Christ. Let nothing then take place which may create a division among you, but be united to your Bishop and those who preside over you, and take them for your pattern and guides in the way to immortality."

In the conclusion of the same letter, he returns once more to this subject, and says,—“ Study then to be confirmed in the doctrine of our Lord and of his Apostles, that so whatever ye do, ye may prosper in body and in spirit, in faith and in charity, together with your most worthy Bishop, and your spiritual crown, the body of Presbyters, Be subject to your Bishop and to one another, as Jesus Christ is to the Father, according to God. Father, and the Apostles both to Christ and to the Holy Ghost, that you may be united in one body and one spirit.”

With the same views, and on similar grounds, he exhorts the members of the Church of Tralles.—“ It is necessary that you so conduct yourselves as to do nothing without your Bishop.

Also be subject to your Presbyters as to the Apostles of Jesus Christ, our hope. The Deacons, too, as being the servants of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, must be esteemed by all: For they are not the ministers of meat and drink, but of the Church of God. Let all therefore reverence the Deacons, and the Bishop as Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, and the Presbyters as the Sanhedrim of God and college of the Apostles. Without these there is no Church.—I exhort you, therefore, or rather not I, but the love of Jesus Christ, that you use none but Christian nourishment, abstaining from pasture which is of another kind, I mean heresy: For they that are heretics mix up the doctrine of Jesus Christ with their own poison, as men give a deadly potion mixed up with sweet wine, which he who is ignorant of its qualities does, with treacherous pleasure, drink to his own death. Wherefore guard yourselves against such persons; which you will certainly do, if you continue steadfast to Jesus Christ, to your Bishop, and to the commands of the Apostles. He that is within the

altar is pure ; but he that is without, that is, he who does anything without the Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons, is not pure in his conscience."

When Ignatius wrote this letter to the Trallians, he appears to have already proceeded as far as Smyrna on his way to Rome, where he was put to death by order of the Emperor Trajan.—“ I salute you from Smyrna, together with the delegates of the churches who are present with me, and who have refreshed me in all things, both in the body and in the spirit. My bonds, which I carry about me for the sake of Christ, exhort you that you continue in concord among yourselves, and in prayer with one another. For it becomes every one of you, especially the Presbyters, to refresh the Bishop, to the honour of the Father, of Jesus Christ, and of the Apostles.—Fare ye well in Jesus Christ ; being subject to your Bishop as to the command of God, and so likewise to the Presbytery.”

The same Apostolic Father wrote also to the Philadelphians,—a church whose character for purity and steadfastness is honourably mentioned in

the third chapter of the Revelation,—and in his Epistle you will find these memorable words :—
 “ Let it be your endeavour to partake all of the same holy Eucharist : For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup in the unity of his blood ; one altar ; as also there is one Bishop, together with his Presbyters, and the Deacons, my fellow-servants.”

With similar earnestness he addresses the Church of Smyrna, and says,—“ See that you all follow your Bishop as Jesus Christ, and the Presbyters as the Apostles, and reverence the Deacons as the appointment of God. Let no man do anything belonging to the Church in separation from the Bishop. Let that Eucharist be looked upon as regularly administered, which is either offered by the Bishop himself or by him to whom the Bishop has confided this duty. It is not lawful, without the Bishop, either to baptize or to celebrate the holy communion ; but whatever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing unto God ; and whatsoever is so done, is surely and well done.”

I shall give but one extract more from the writ-

ings of Ignatius, namely, from his Epistle to Polycarp, the friend and disciple of the Apostles. Addressing the people through their spiritual head, he says,—“ My brethren, hearken unto the Bishop, that God may hearken unto you. I pledge myself for them who submit to their Bishop, with the Presbyters and Deacons ; and may my portion be together with theirs in God.”

The next Father I shall mention is Polycarp himself, the Bishop of Smyrna, who is said by the earliest authors of ecclesiastical history to have been ordained to his office by the hands of the Apostles. In an Epistle addressed by him to the Philippians, the inscription is as follows :—“ Polycarp, and the Presbyters that are with him, unto the Church of God, which is at Philippi ;” thereby intimating, it has been understood, the superiority which belonged to his own function. On any other principle, indeed, the form of words which he uses would have been neither modest nor appropriate. In the body of the same letter he admonishes the Deacons and Priests in these words :—“ Knowing that God is not mocked, we

ought to walk worthy both of his commands and of his glory. Also the Deacons must be blameless as the ministers of God in Christ, and not of men ; not false accusers, not double-tongued, not lovers of money, but moderate in all things, compassionate, careful, walking according to the truth of the Lord who was the servant of all. And let the Presbyters be compassionate and merciful towards all persons ; turning them from their errors, seeking out those that are weak ; not forgetting the widows, the fatherless, and the poor, but always providing what is good both in the sight of God and of man.—I am greatly afflicted for Valens, who was once a Presbyter among you, that he should so little understand the place that was given to him in the Church. Wherefore I admonish you, that ye abstain from covetousness, and that ye be chaste and true of speech. Keep yourselves from all evil ; for he that in these things cannot govern himself, how shall he be able to admonish others ? But I have neither seen nor heard anything of the kind in you among whom the blessed Paul laboured.”

In this communication there is a paragraph which is at once very interesting on account of its subject, and extremely important, as vouching for the authenticity of those epistles which are universally ascribed to Ignatius, and from which I have made the above quotations.—“ You wrote to me,” says Polycarp to the Philippians, “ both you and Ignatius, that if any one went from hence into Syria, he should bring your letters with him ; which also I will take care of as soon as I shall have a convenient opportunity. The epistles of Ignatius, which he wrote unto us, together with what others of his have come into our hands, we have sent you, agreeably to your request. They are subjoined to this epistle ; and by them you may greatly profit, for they treat of faith and patience, and of all things that pertain to edification in the Lord Jesus.—What you have learned with certainty respecting Ignatius, and those who are with him, have the goodness to make known unto us.”

At the expense of your patience, I have laid before you extracts from the acknowledged writ-

ings of three primitive Fathers, the contemporaries of the holy Apostles, and who succeeded them in the government of the Church. Can there be any doubt, then, that in the period which immediately followed the personal ministry of St Peter and St Paul—the last thirty years of the first century—there were three orders of clergymen in the Christian Church, the Bishop, the Presbyter, and the Deacon? Never, I think, was evidence more distinct and conclusive: And as the three authors from whose writings I have quoted were disciples of the Apostles, lived in their society, knew their doctrines and their views in regard to the constitution of the Church, we cannot permit ourselves to imagine that they would sanction a polity which had not the example and approbation of those inspired men to support it. It is universally allowed among the earliest Christian writers, that Ignatius and Polycarp were ordained by the hands of the Apostles; and St Paul himself informs us, that Clemens was a fellow-labourer with him in the Gospel of Christ. Are we not, then, entitled to regard the model of ecclesiastical

constitution which these holy men adopted, as possessing the full authority and sanction of their inspired masters ; or, must we believe, that, under the very eye of those from whom they received their knowledge of the faith,—the immediate and personal servants of the Redeemer, those Divine commissioners upon whom the foundations of the Church were laid,—they deviated from the pattern with which they were thus supplied, and constructed a system according to their own views or convenience ? Let every candid person ask himself, which of the two suppositions is the more probable—taking into full consideration the time, the circumstances, the subject, and the persons—and I will risk the determination of the question at issue upon the answer which will spontaneously rise in his mind.*

It cannot have escaped you, that, in estimating the value of the testimony now brought forward,

* Ignatius is said to have received consecration—*δια της του μεγαλου Πιτρου δεξιας*, and Eusebius tells us that Polycarp was *υπο αποστολων εν τη εκκλησια εν Σμυρνα ο επισκοπος κατασταθεις*.—Lib. iv, c. 13.

and more especially in drawing the suitable conclusions from it, a slight degree of fallacy has arisen among the opponents of episcopacy, from limiting the proof supplied by the writings of the Apostolical Fathers to the period of their death. For example, it cannot be denied that in the time of Ignatius there were three orders of clergymen, and that the word Bishop was already appropriated to the highest of these orders, as regular and permanent office-bearers in the church: But, instead of applying the inference to the whole time during which the martyr of Antioch presided over the oriental Christians, it has been usual to restrict the conclusion to the date at which he terminated his labours. It was in the year 110, according to St Jerome, and in 116, according to other authorities, that Ignatius was thrown to the lions at Rome; and hence it has become common to acknowledge that, in the second century, a proper episcopacy was regularly formed, and that thenceforth it continued till the period of the Reformation. Is it not obvious, however, that if the testimony of Ignatius be of

any weight at all in this question, it must apply not only to the epoch of his demise, but to the whole term of his ministry—that is, from 69, the year after St Paul and St Peter were put to death, to 110, the date assigned by the Presbyter of Dalmatia for his martyrdom ;—and, consequently, that the concession just mentioned ought to be extended to the first century, even to the Apostolic age itself ?*

Were it necessary to pursue to any greater extent this line of argument, I should draw your attention to Irenæus, who lived about the middle of the second century, and who, as he himself tells us, was acquainted with Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, and had heard him teach. “ Polycarp,” says he, “ was not only taught by the Apostles, and conversed with many of them who saw our Lord Christ, but was also by the Apostles made Bishop in Asia in that church which is at Smyrna, whom we ourselves saw in our younger age ; for he lasted long, and being

* See Note I in Appendix.

very old, he most nobly and gloriously suffered martyrdom, and thereby passed out of this life.”* Eusebius informs us, that Irenæus was at first a Presbyter in the church of Lyons, under Pothinus, whom he afterwards succeeded as Bishop, and that he died in possession of the see.

In reference to the subject in hand, it may be enough to mention that this Father usually speaks of Bishops and Presbyters as distinct orders of clergy, having different offices, and possessing different powers. This fact is so fully acknowledged by the opponents of Episcopacy, that they allow the distinction to have been completely established in his days, and admit that the words Bishop and Presbyter had no longer the same signification. But we have already found that these names and offices were perfectly distinct in the times of Ignatius and Polycarp; and hence, without incurring the charge of precipitation, we might infer that they became so immediately after the demise of the Apostles, from

* Irenæus advers. Hæres., lib. iii.

which period the term Bishop was applied to their successors in the government of the church. On this important point, however, we are not left to mere inference ; on the contrary, we are informed by Theodoret that those who were called Bishops in the period at which he lived, were originally called Apostles, but that, out of a feeling of reverence for the holy men to whom the latter title was first applied, they adopted the name of Bishop, which was ever afterwards appropriated to their order.*

But, admitting that the second century had advanced ten or fifteen years before the office of a Bishop, properly so called, and the subordination of the Presbyters were established, upon what principle shall we account for the supposed change in the constitution of the church? Instead of answering this question, I shall submit to your consideration the following remarks by Bishop Burnet, who has never been considered

* Τους νῦν καλουμενους ἐπισκοπους Αποστολους ὀνομαζον—της ἐπισκοπης προσηγοριαν τοις παλαι καλουμενοις ἀποστολοις ἐπέθεσαν.

an intemperate supporter of Episcopacy : “ The difference of Bishop and Presbyter is so express in Irenæus, that the most learned assertors of parity confess the change was begun before his time. Now, how this change could have been introduced, when there was neither Council nor secular prince to establish it, when churchmen were so pure, (Polycarp, an apostolic man, having died but about thirty years before, besides many other apostolic men, who had long survived,) when the church was in the fire of persecution, and so less dross could be among them, when there was no secular interest to bait them to it, (for, on the contrary, this subjected them to the first fury of the persecution,) seems strange. And it is not easy to be imagined or believed, how this could have been so suddenly received through all the churches both *Eastern* and *Western*, and that there was none to witness against it ; and that neither the sincerity of some Presbyters, nor the pride of others, should have moved them to appear for their privileges against this usurpation : and how neither heretic nor schismatick,

save one, and that about two hundred years after, should have charged the church with this; on the contrary, all of them having their own Bishops: and how this government continued in so peaceful possession through the succession of so many ages, till of late, when even fundamentals are brought under debate; if this superiority were either so criminal as some hold it to be, or had not been introduced at least by some apostolical men, if not by the Apostles themselves, will not be easily cleared.”*

As a farther proof that the Episcopal form of church-government was established in the days of the Apostles, an appeal has usually been made to the description of the seven churches in Asia Minor, contained in the Revelation of St John. The short letters of warning, reproof, and admonition, here alluded to, are addressed to an office-bearer, who is styled the Angel of the church. This mode of phraseology, it deserves to be remarked, is borrowed from the usages of the Jew-

* See Note K in Appendix.

ish synagogue, where the person who presided in Divine worship, usually called the Ruler of the synagogue, was not unfrequently denominated the Angel of the congregation. He had under him, also, two classes of ministers corresponding to the priest and deacon of the Christian assemblies; and in other respects there are so many points of resemblance, as to remove all doubt that the ecclesiastical model recommended by the example of the Apostles was raised upon the platform of the Levitical establishment.*

Were we to follow the judgment of the early Fathers, who certainly had better means of becoming acquainted with the practice and language

* “The Pastor and Overseer appears to have been styled, indifferently, the *Apostle*, (which our translators have, on one occasion, *Phil. ii. 25*, improperly rendered the *Messenger*,) the *Angel*, or the *Bishop* of the church over which he presided; or, when he was classed with other ministers inferior to himself, they were all denominated Priests or Presbyters, as had been the practice likewise with respect to the Jewish priests of different orders under the Mosaic dispensation.” See “*A Charge delivered in August, 1829, to the Clergy of the Episcopal Communion of Brechin. By the Right Reverend George Gleig, LL.D.*”

of the church than can fall to the lot of modern authors, we should determine without hesitation, that the persons addressed by the inspired writer were the Bishops or chief ministers of the several Christian societies specified in the beginning of the Apocalypse. The same conclusion is in no small degree recommended by the failure of every attempt to impose a different meaning upon this remarkable passage of Holy Scripture. In truth, there is no reason whatever to believe that the principle of parity, or equality, was ever intended to be introduced into the church of the Redeemer. He himself chose twelve Apostles, to whom he intrusted a higher power than he communicated to the seventy disciples, whom he also employed as his ministers in establishing the kingdom of God. In this arrangement there was a distinct reference to the constitution of the Mosaical economy, the priesthood of which presented a corresponding gradation. Nor can it have escaped notice, that Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, and the other apostolical fathers, trace a similarity in this respect between the old covenant and the new ;

and also recommend reverence and submission towards the different orders of Christian ministers, on the very ground that they occupied the places which the Almighty assigned to the house of Aaron and the tribe of Levi under the Law. It may therefore be asserted, with a high degree of confidence, that the angels commemorated in the Apocalypse were the Bishops of the first Christian churches at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.*

Presuming, then, that no candid person will question the fact, that there were three orders of ministers in the church during the Apostolic age, as well as in the century which immediately followed it, I proceed now,

In the *third* place, to examine into the authorities produced by those who deny the apostolical institution of Episcopacy, and even the high antiquity which has just been claimed for it.

The main authority on which this opposition is founded, is an opinion expressed by St Jerome,

* See Note L in Appendix.

that Episcopal government originated not in a Divine institution, but in certain views of expediency suggested by the divided state of the church. He repeats the observation already so fully examined, respecting the indiscriminate use of the words Bishop and Presbyter in the Apostolic age; adding, it was not until certain schisms arose in the Christian community, that it was deemed expedient to elect one of the Presbyters to preside permanently over his brethren, and to repress their dissensions.

“This,” says he, “took place when men began to say, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, and regarded those whom they baptized as their own followers, and not as the followers of Christ. In these circumstances,” he continues, “it was decreed over the whole world, that one Presbyter in every church should be placed over the rest, in order that the seeds of schism might be eradicated, and harmony maintained among the various members of every spiritual society.” I have given you the substance of what the learned Jerome

states in his commentary on the Epistle to Titus, as well as in his letter to Evagrius, where he enters into the subject at considerable length.

Now, in regard to the opinion of that venerable father, there are two things to be considered. If the nomination of one of the Presbyters in every church to direct and govern the others took place at the time when men began to say, I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos, it must have been sanctioned by the Apostles ; for at that period no one will deny that they had the care of all the churches. If this be admitted, (and the literal meaning of St Jerome's words justifies the conclusion,) then we have for Episcopacy all the warrant and sanction that its most ardent supporters would desire to possess. But it must not be concealed that those who make use of the authority of this ancient commentator endeavour to prove that the arrangement he speaks of could not have been introduced until after the death of the Apostles ; and that he meant only to say that the spirit of dissension, which afterwards rendered

such an expedient necessary, began to show itself so early as the days when Christians formed themselves into parties under favourite leaders.

Admitting this interpretation, and the inference which is founded upon it, we are nevertheless entitled to ask, at what particular time, between the days of St John, the last of the Apostles, and the days of Irenæus, when all parties allow that Episcopacy was regularly formed, did the decree mentioned by St Jerome obtain the approbation of the Church? Is there any author who mentions such a decree, which is said to have been acted upon throughout the whole Christian world? Was there any Church, in the early period alluded to, which acknowledged to have received such a document, or to have heard of it, or to have seen a transcript of it? We find Polycarp sending to the Philippians copies of the letters which he and the people of Smyrna had received from Ignatius, although these were in some degree private communications; but nowhere do we find an allusion to that important Deed which altered the constitution of the Church, and which could not otherwise be re-

garded than as the new charter of the great Christian establishment in all parts of the habitable world. This decree must have appeared to every clergyman as an Instrument much more important than the letters of Clement, of Polycarp, or of Ignatius ; and yet, strange to say, there is not in the writings of any of the Fathers, nor of any other author, ecclesiastical or civil, the slightest reference to any such canon or institute. A resolution at once so extremely important, and of such extensive obligation, could not be adopted without general consent. Nor could the concurrence of all the churches in Europe and Asia have been obtained without some degree of publicity ; and hence the ground of a fair and rational presumption, that, if any such resolution had been formed by the universal society of Christians, some traces of it would have been discoverable in the private letters or public records of their age.

In short, the statement of St Jerome is a mere hypothesis, employed by him to account for a fact which seemed to be attended with some obscurity, namely, the appropriation of the term Bishop to

the first order of clergymen. This fact is mentioned by other writers, who, as well as he, observed the change ; but none of them drew the inference from it which he thought proper to advance. They perceived, as Theodoret tells us, that, as the first order of ministers modestly relinquished the title of Apostles, the term Bishop was thenceforth restricted to that order ; while the second from that time forward were exclusively called Presbyters.

It is worthy of remark in passing, that St Jerome, whose authority is so often referred to by the enemies of Episcopal government, mentions a striking fact in regard to the church of Alexandria. He says, that from the days of St Mark, the first Bishop of that city, during a period which comprehended several successions, the Presbyters had uniformly elected one of their own number as their chief Pastor, whom they elevated to a higher degree, and acknowledged as their head. Now, we know that St Mark died while several of the Apostles were still living ; and hence we perceive distinctly that the practice mentioned by St

Jerome, which began at the death of the Evangelist just named, must have commenced in the apostolical age, and thereby laid the foundation of a true and regular Episcopacy.

But, viewing the statement of the learned Father on the ground of reason and experience, we shall soon be satisfied that nothing is more improbable than that ambitious, schismatical, and turbulent Presbyters would agree unanimously, and agree at the same moment throughout the whole of Christendom, to relinquish the power which they are supposed to have abused, and to place over their own heads an individual clothed with authority to repress their disorders, and even to punish their irregularities. Look into the history of mankind from the first ages until now, and see whether an example of such self-abasement, such a sacrifice of pride and power, has anywhere taken place, either among civilians or clergymen. Were we to expect such an abandonment of self-interest and vain-glory in any community, we should be inclined to go in search of it among some body of quiet and pious Christians, who

were of one heart, one faith, and one baptism, and who, for the sake of their common religion, were ready to give up every thing but the favour of God and the testimony of their own consciences. Among such holy and unambitious persons we might perhaps find a disposition willing to resign all things for peace and the welfare of the Church ; but least of all should we expect to find it among men infected with heresy and schism, and struggling, at the same time, for worldly eminence and professional distinction.

If these, therefore, must be regarded as the last who would resign any privilege to which their rank in the Church entitled them, so the Bishops of that early period were the least likely of all men to usurp an authority not belonging to their office. In the first age after the Apostles, the dignities of the Episcopate were so closely connected with suffering and death, that the first place in the Church was the nearest step to a cruel martyrdom. Had the holy men whom we find presiding over the brethren, imagined that the government of the ecclesiastical body by Pres-

byters was the order established by the Apostles, no earthly consideration would have induced them to alter it. They would have indignantly rejected an honour purchased at the expense of a Divine ordinance. Every conscientious Presbyter, on the other hand, would have felt the same reluctance to countenance an innovation on that apostolical model, which he must necessarily have viewed as in some degree an institution of Heaven. The good would have retained the rights of their order on principle, and the proud and the factious would have clung to them through passion and the love of power; and hence, I repeat, it is quite impossible that so great a change as that suggested by St Jerome could have taken place, without creating such an impression on the Christian community as must have left some traces of its existence in the private annals or public records of the Church.*

It has thus, I think, appeared undeniable, that, in the time of the Apostles, there were three or-

* See Note M in Appendix.

ders of clergymen in the Church of Christ ; that the same form of polity was continued by their disciples in the next age, as is proved by the succession of Bishops at Rome, Alexandria, Smyrna, and Antioch ; and that, by the middle of the second century, the evidence for the existence of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, as separate and distinct ministers, becomes so strong and convincing as to satisfy even the enemies of Episcopacy, that all ambiguity as to their titles and offices was now completely removed.

You require not to be told, that this model of ecclesiastical constitution continued unchallenged during fifteen hundred years, and extended to all parts of the world. At length, in the small state of Geneva, the doctrinal reformation introduced by Luther was favoured by a large portion of the inhabitants, in opposition to the Bishop, who still supported the tenets of the Romish Church. This prelate and others of the clergy fled from the scene of danger and innovation ; upon which the management of affairs fell into the hands of

the celebrated Calvin, who, finding that no Bishop had joined the new society, formed a system of church-government which could be conducted without the aid of that higher order ; and hence the origin of Lay Elders and Deacons. The Presbyters were all at once invested with the authority of Bishops, while the places of the Presbyters and Deacons were filled by laymen. Calvin at first pleaded necessity for this unprecedented measure which altered entirely the constitution of the church ; and, so far from inviting others to follow him in a course so unwonted and daring, he declared that those churches which enjoyed the blessing of having Bishops favourable to the Reformation, were deserving of every anathema, if they deviated from the constitution which had descended from Apostolical times. Thus Calvin, in some measure, condemned the expedient which he felt himself compelled to adopt. Bucer, in this respect, followed the example of the Gallican reformer. He dissuaded such churches as possessed Bishops from imitat-

ing the pattern of Geneva, which had proceeded from necessity and not from the authority of the primitive ages; and he entreated the churches of Germany and England not to carry reformation so far as to obliterate their resemblance to those Christian societies which were formed by the Apostles.*

The distinctive characteristic of episcopal government is the exclusive power intrusted to the Bishops of ordaining ministers for the service of the Church. From the day that St Paul authorised and commanded his two spiritual sons, Timothy and Titus, to ordain Presbyters in every city, to exhort and to rebuke, this privilege, it is believed, hath appertained to the first order of clergymen, as the successors of the Apostles. Even St Jerome, who has been viewed as the advocate of parity in the ministers of the gospel, acknowledges that the Bishops possessed a power which belonged not to the order of Presbyters, namely, the power of ordination. *Quid enim,*

* See Note N in Appendix.

EXCEPTA ORDINATIONE, *facit Episcopus quod Presbyter non faciat?** But this exception is the grand badge of distinction between the episcopal church and all others. Fifteen hundred years passed away in which there is not one instance of a regular and authorised ordination performed by Presbyters alone ; and there is no Council or Synod on record which gave to that class of ministers the power of conferring holy orders. On the contrary, Epiphanius pronounces Aerius a heretic, on the sole ground of his holding the doctrine, that Presbyters might ordain. Ischy-ras, who allowed a schismatical priest to put him into holy orders, or rather to perform the ordination-service with that intention, was most severely condemned, and declared by the church to be still a layman. Nay, on one occasion, when a Bishop, whose sight was so much decayed as not to be able to read, employed one of his Presbyters to pronounce from the book the form of words

* What is there that a Bishop does, which a Presbyter cannot do, *except ordination?*

used in ordination, while he himself laid his hands on the head of the person to be ordained, the ordination was, by the church, declared to be invalid, because the Bishop did not, with his own mouth, utter the words in which authority is given to minister in sacred things.*

I mention these facts to show how rigidly the church confined the power of ordination to the first or episcopal order of the clergy, and thereby to enable you to form some idea of the irregularity of those reformers who abolished that order altogether; who bestowed upon Presbyters the privileges and authority which had in all former times belonged to the Bishops; who put laymen into the places of the clerical Elders and Deacons; and, in one word, totally and radically altered the whole constitution of the church Apostolic. This, I repeat, is the ground upon which episcopal churches differ from those who have extinguished the first order of clergy. It is not the form of worship, nor the dress, nor the music, nor

* See Note O in Appendix.

even the keeping of those fasts and festivals which commemorate the great events of our holy religion, that constitute the real difference between Episcopalians and other Christians ; for in many parts of the continent the Presbyterians use a liturgy as we do, and there, as well as in England, they observe the principal festivals and fasts of the church as regularly as do the Episcopalians among whom they live. These points, then, important as they are, do not form the leading and distinguishing characteristic of Episcopacy, as separated from the other forms of ecclesiastical polity. The essential difference, I say once more, respects the power of conferring orders,—a power which we believe to have been originally vested in the Bishops, and, during 1500 years, to have been exercised by them exclusively—so exclusively at least as to imply that no ordination was held valid at which a Bishop did not preside and officiate.

The considerations now stated have at all times had a deep influence on the minds of the higher and better informed class of the Scottish people. Accustomed to reverence an institution which ap-

peared to them to possess an Apostolical sanction, they could not, at the Revolution, be induced to relinquish the ancient form of ecclesiastical polity, assailed though it was by strong prejudices, and identified in some measure with a civil administration which took no pains to acquire popularity. So strong, indeed, was the attachment of many among the nobles and older gentry of the land to Episcopacy, that, in order to depress a church which had incurred the suspicion of Government, it was found necessary to visit with political disqualification and forfeiture, a preference which could in no other way be eradicated. This preference, you are all aware, rested on the facts stated above; on the authority of which it was inferred that, as Presbyters had never in any ancient church been invested with the power of conferring holy orders, it might be lawful to question the regularity of the new ecclesiastical constitution.

I state these things, my brethren, not to unchurch other societies,—for with others we have no immediate concern,—but solely to explain the grounds upon which every episcopal communion

is established, and upon which every well-informed Episcopalian rests his preference of that communion. I mention them the more readily, too, because they form the basis upon which our own church must stand, in the midst of others much more powerful, and supported by a larger proportion of the people. Doctrines, or rather the mode of explaining doctrines, differ from time to time, and one style of preaching succeeds another in the favour of the multitude ; but the Apostolic institution from which the clergy derive their authority to minister at the altar, and which confers the stamp of validity upon their ministrations, is the fixed and immoveable rock upon which the church is built, and against which we must never allow either ignorance or caprice to prevail. Nor is there in this spirit and determination on our part the slightest encouragement to illiberality towards others. On the contrary, you will find that the most enlightened persons are always the most liberal, in the true sense of the word ; and I will venture to add, that the pretended liberality of an ignorant man is either indifference or

folly. No one is more disposed to respect conscientious firmness in others than he who can give a good reason of the faith which he himself entertains ; and, for this cause, knowledge will always be found accompanied by a truly tolerant and Christian spirit,—by compassion where error is inveterate, and by forbearance where prejudice and obstinacy shut the ears to conviction.

My Christian brethren, you are this day to witness one of the most solemn services ever performed in the church of Christ, the canonical elevation of a Presbyter to that high office which comprehends the power, the jurisdiction, and the responsibility bequeathed by the Apostles to their successors. As a member of the diocese over which the new Bishop is to preside, I may perhaps be permitted to express, in the name of my clerical brethren, the satisfaction with which this event is contemplated, and the unbounded confidence which they repose in his wisdom, his principles, impartiality, and, above all, in the knowledge which he possesses of his own duty and of theirs, and in his ardent devotedness to that cause

which they also are equally disposed and equally bound to maintain. In the step which it was their duty and their privilege to take in electing their Diocesan, there was not only unanimity, there was also affection, combined with an earnest desire to mix their individual regard for his person with their professional respect for his office. In this case, too, the choice of the clergy has been amply and universally approved by the suffrages of the laity ; by those whose spiritual welfare depends upon the due and rightful ministry of an Apostolic church. What, then, remains, but that with one heart we pray for the peace of our Jerusalem ; and that, with feelings not less ardent and sincere than those of the ancient Israelite, we say, “ May they prosper that love thee !”

APPENDIX.

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NOTE A.

FEW things in ancient philosophy are more remarkable than the general consent which prevailed among writers of different sects, and even of distant countries, respecting the periodical decay and renovation of the earth. It was their opinion, that a certain period was fixed for the existence of all terrestrial things, which, from a principle of inherent corruption, were supposed gradually to lose their original excellence, and to decline towards a complete and hopeless depravity. Like an old building, the structure of the globe was imagined to suffer the injuries of time, and to require that its materials should be renewed by the action of fire, and be made fit for the residence of an improved order of living creatures. This singular impression had taken a deep hold of the Gentile nations, as well as of the Jewish church, two centuries before the advent of Christ, and appears to have become stronger and more vivid as the era of the Nativity advanced towards its completion. The beautiful lines of Virgil are familiar to the youngest reader :—

Ultima Cumaei venit jam carminis aetas :
 Magnus ab integro seclorum nascitur ordo ;
 Jam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia Regna :—
 Jam nova progenies coelo demittitur alto,
 ——— ac toto surget gens aurea mundo.
 Adspice convexo nutantem pondere mundum
 Terrasque tractusque maris, coelumque profundum :
 Adspice venturo laetentur ut omnia saeclo.

Porphry, in his Life of Pythagoras, relates, that the philosopher just named brought from foreign lands into Greece the opinion that, “ after fixed cycles or periods of time, there will be a repetition of everything which has formerly existed. The same things that have been, will be again, and nothing entirely new is called into being.”—The dogma, that the present world shall be destroyed by fire, is to be found in Seneca, who ascribes it to Eastern authors who lived long before his times. Strabo and Plutarch have preserved the same tradition, as handed down from the Druidical priests and Etrurian soothsayers :—“ Mundum hunc ingenti conflagraturum incendio, uti mox reparetur succedatque nova moles, suos item deos et proprios habitura.” The description of Sophocles, who has embodied in fine poetry the belief that the globe shall be dissolved by fire, and afterwards renewed, has been frequently quoted :—

Ἔσται, γὰρ ἔσται ἑκεῖνος αἰώνων χρόνος

Ὅταν πυρὸς γεμοντα θησαυρον σχησῇ

Χρυσωπὸς αἰθέρ· ἡ δὲ βροσκηθεῖσα φλόξ

Ἄπαντα τὰ πηγεία καὶ μεταρσία

Φλεῖξει μανείσα.

Κατεῖπα σώσει πανθ' ἃ προθ' ἀπώλεισεν.

NOTE B.

That the end of the world was generally expected by the Christians in the second century is rendered manifest by all the authentic writings of that early age. It was likewise an article of belief, that this great event would be ushered in by the downfall of the Roman empire, which was conceived to be the obstacle mentioned by St Paul to the revelation of the Man of Sin. There are passages in the works of Tertullian which lead to the suspicion that he entertained similar sentiments. He appears, however, to have felt the necessity of concealing them, and is betrayed by the struggle between his conviction and his prudence into occasional inconsistency of language. He sometimes speaks as if Christians ought,—at other times as if they ought not,—to pray for the speedy consummation of all things. In the tract *de Spectaculis*, his exultation at the prospect of the approaching triumph of the Christians, and of the punishment of their adversaries, nearly gets the better of his discretion :—“ *Quale autem spectaculum in proximo est adventus Domini jam indubitati, jam superbi, jam triumphantis.*”

In order to remove the distrust with which the Roman governors regarded the Christian assemblies, Tertullian states in his Apology, that they prayed for the emperors, for their officers, for all who were in authority, that the course of the world might be peaceably ordered, and that the consummation of all things might be deferred. “ *Oramus etiam pro imperatoribus, pro ministris eorum ac potestatibus, pro statu seculi, pro rerum quiete, pro mora finis.*” In the same tract he acknowledges the impression entertained among the Christians, that the downfall of the Roman state was immediately to precede the end of the

world ; but he is pleased, at the same time, to urge the existence of this belief as a reason why the faithful, far from cherishing hostile designs against the empire, prayed earnestly for its continuance and prosperity :—" Est et alia major necessitas nobis orandi pro imperatoribus, etiam pro omni statu imperii rebusque Romanis, qui vim maximam universo orbi imminentem, ipsamque clausulam seculi acerbitates horrendas comminantem, Romani imperii commeatu scimus retardari ; itaque nolumus experiri, et dum precamur differri, Romanae diuturnitati favemus."

The good Father, however, is not always consistent with himself ; for, in his treatise *de Oratione*, he condemns those who pray for the longer continuance of the present world, on the ground that such a petition is at variance with the clause in the Lord's Prayer, *Thy kingdom come*.—See *Eccles. Hist. of the Second and Third Centuries*, by the Bishop of Lincoln, pp. 21. 335. 369.

NOTE C.

It is not easy in a mere note to give even an epitome of the arguments upon which the more ancient chronology of the Jews and Christians is supported, in preference to that abridged system of dates which appears in the authorised translation of the Bible, and which was inserted on the authority of Archbishop Usher and of Bishop Lloyd. On this account I must satisfy myself with a list of the authors who, in the course of the last century, have written on this subject, and whose reasoning is so conclusive as to leave not the smallest doubt as to the superior accuracy of the primitive calculation. Omitting the name of Isaac Vossius, who lived at an earlier period than that to which our retrospect extends, we may begin with the "Chrono-

logical Antiquities" of the Reverend John Jackson, who has combined in his laborious treatise everything that is valuable in the works of foreign writers, especially of Vossius, Pezron, Martianay, J. Scaliger, Petavius, and Simon.

These chronologers, by taking very different views and by investigating with the greatest assiduity all the records of remote ages, have exhausted the subject, so far as we consider its materials and authority. A small volume published anonymously, but which was traced to the pen of the learned Mr Hayes, exhibits an outline of the argument in favour of the Septuagint Chronology. But the most comprehensive work on this subject is the "New Analysis of Chronology" by the Reverend Dr Hales; who, proceeding on the ground so ably assumed by Jackson, has triumphantly established his main positions, and shown distinctly that the opinions of Usher, derived from the modern Jews, are entirely destitute of foundation. The difference between the true chronology and the corrupted scheme substituted by the Rabbis, amounts to more than fourteen hundred years. The learned Faber, in like manner, gives the sanction of his judgment to the same conclusion, more especially as it respects the period between the Flood and the birth of Abraham. Perhaps I may be permitted to add, that a condensed statement of the whole argument, with a review of the opinions maintained by the principal authors in Germany, France, and England, is embodied in a Preliminary Dissertation prefixed to the "Connection of Sacred and Profane History," which I was induced to publish about two years ago.

It is much to be regretted that two such men as Hales and Faber should have indulged their imaginations so far as to fix a date for the commencement of the Millennium—

that stumbling-block of commentators and chronologers ! The former, in particular, looked forward to that dreadful consummation with a feeling of assurance not inferior to that with which a tenant views the expiry of his lease. His good wishes in favour of London close his last volume, and breathe his valedictory affections. “ If *ten righteous* citizens would have saved *Sodom*, that abominable city, even in the very jaws of destruction, may we not venture to hope that *many tens* are still to be found in the British metropolis and its environs ? And that whatever may be the final doom of *London*, (which we, in particular, deprecate most fervently, from long-tried experience, and no short, nor slight, nor confined observation of the disinterested kindness and hospitality of *Englishmen*,) yet we fondly hope that a gracious *Zoar*, or asylum for the *faithful witnesses*, a *little* city of refuge, will be found in their great and sorest trial.”

NOTE D.

There is no one conversant in the church-history of England who is not aware that a question has arisen as to the fact, whether the articles of 1552 ever received the sanction of Convocation, or were merely drawn up and recommended to the King in Council by the “ Bishops and other learned and godly men.” Upon an examination of the evidence adduced on both sides, it has appeared to me as placed beyond all reasonable doubt, that the said articles were approved by a general Synod of the Church assembled at London. But to such as may think the matter deserving of farther inquiry, I beg leave to mention “ An Historical Account of the Thirty-nine Articles, from the first promulgation of them in 1553 to their final establishment

in 1571 ; with exact Copies of the Latin and English Manuscripts, and Fac-similes of the Signatures of the Archbishops, &c. By John Lamb, D. D., Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge."

It is deserving of notice, that, in the Articles of 1662, there is no mention made of the Millennium ; and it has been thence inferred, that the *Jewish dotages* must already have obtained some degree of respect, and perhaps divided the opinions of the two Houses of Convocation. At all events, the Articles enacted in the reign of Elizabeth make no allusion to that mysterious subject.

NOTE E.

No subject, if ably handled, would prove more interesting, even to a Christian reader, than the history of *Fatalism*, from its earliest stage in the writings of the ancient philosophers, to the form which it has assumed in our own days, in connexion with our various systems of ethics and divinity. The question which respects the decrees of God, and the freedom of choice in man, has been agitated in the schools, ever since human society put on the external aspect of civilization, and presented to the more reflecting of its members a subject for thought and conjecture.

I had prepared a brief outline of the history now alluded to, with the view of illustrating the statement in the text, that "the principal opinions on this head which at present divide the Christian world are much older than the men with whose names we are accustomed to associate them, and that they were made the ground of discussion and controversy two thousand years before either Calvin or Arminius was born." But the limits of a note prevent me from pursuing the inquiry at present. Suffice it to say, that we

have drawn from a foreign source, unknown to most of the inspired writers of the New Testament, the chief difficulties which perplex our path in the investigation of those tenets which are now associated with Election, Predestination, and Free Will.

NOTE F.

If our opponents will say (because they have nothing left to say) that all London, for example, was but one parish, and that the Presbyter of every other parish was as much a Bishop as the Bishop of London, because the words *Επισκοπος* and *Πρεσβυτερος*, Bishop and Presbyter, are sometimes used in the same sense; they may as well prove that Christ was but a Deacon, because he is called, Romans xv. 8, *Διακονος*, which we rightly translate a Minister: And Bishop signifies an Overseer, and Presbyter an Ancient Man, or Elder Man; whence our term of Alderman. And this is as good a foundation to prove that the Apostles were Aldermen, in the city acceptation of the word, or that our Aldermen are all Bishops and Apostles, as to prove that Presbyters and Bishops are all one, from the childish jingle of the words.

It would be the same thing as if one should undertake to confront all antiquity, and prove against all histories, that the emperors of Rome were no more than generals of armies, and that every Roman general was emperor of Rome, because he could find the word *imperator* sometimes applied to the general of an army.

Or, as if a commonwealth-man should get up and say, that our former kings were no more than our dukes are now, because the style of *Grace*, which is now given to dukes, was then given to kings.

And suppose that any one were put under the penance of answering to such ridiculous arguments, what method would he take but to show that the emperors of Rome, and former kings of England, had generals of armies and dukes under them, and exercised authority over them?—*Theological Works of the Reverend Mr Charles Leslie*, vol. ii. p. 722.

As to the general meaning and application of the word Bishop, it may amuse the reader to find, that Cicero was on the eve of being appointed by the Great Pompey to an office under that designation; and moreover that Hector is denominated Bishop of Troy. The orator, in writing to his friend Atticus, informs him, that the general wished him to be “quem tota campania et maritima ora habeant Episcopum, ad quem delectus et summa negotii referatur.” In the last book of the Iliad, the widow of the brave Hector laments over his dead body in the following terms:—

πριν γαρ πολις ἦδε κατ' ἀκρης
Περσεται· ἥ γαρ ὀλωλας Επισκοπος, ὅστε μιν αὐτην
ῥυσκει, ἔχεις δ' ἀλοχους κεδνας και νηπια τεκνα.—Lib. 24, v. 728.

NOTE G.

Commentators have assigned various reasons why St John should have called himself a Presbyter, or rather “The Presbyter.” Œcumenius conjectures that this epithet may have had a reference to his advanced age, as well as to his office as a priest. Salmasius, who saw in the expression an argument for parity, maintains, that the Apostle had in view the dignity of the episcopate, which was then no higher than the ordinary priesthood vested in a Presbyter. Mill, in his prolegomena, advances an opinion

that the title of The Presbyter was, as used by St John, higher and more honourable than the names of either Bishop or Apostle:—"Grandis omnino est titulus, et Apostoli illo major, ὁ πρεσβυτερος κατ' ἔξοχην, quique privato homini, vel etiam Episcopo, haudquaquam conveniat. Joannes Presbyter dictus esset Ἰωαννης πρεσβυτερος, vel Ἰωαννης ὁ πρεσβυτερος, vel etiam ὁ πρεσβυτερος Ἰωαννης, quomodo apud Eusebium, Hist. Eccles. iii. 39. Ὁ πρεσβυτερος, absque ulteriori addito, sonat excellentius quiddam, et quod ne simplici Apostolo congruat. Perhaps the notion of Wolfius is still more probable, who thinks that St John had acquired, in the Christian assemblies, the title of the Elder, not only from his advanced age, being ninety, but also from the circumstance, that he was long the sole survivor of all the Apostles. Mihi quidem simplicissime ita videtur statuendum quod Joannes Apostolus ea ætate τοῦ πρεσβυτερου nomine in coetibus sacris cognitus fuerit, tanquam tali, quod ipsi non tantum ex provecta ætate, nonagenario scilicet, sed ex eo competeat, quod Apostolis reliquis omnibus superstes esset."—See *Æcumenius Comment. in Epis. Oper. Edit. Paris. Salmasius in Appar. de Primatu, et in Tract. de Epis. et Presby. Millius Proleg. sect. 153. Wolfius in Epist. Joan. Secund.*

NOTE H.

It is not a little remarkable, that Calvin should have interpreted the word πρεσβυτεριον, (Presbytery,) as denoting, not the body or college of Presbyters which was attached to every church in the Apostolical age, but the office or ministerial authority of a Presbyter. On this principle he translates the 14th verse of the fourth chapter of the First Epistle to Timothy as follows:—Neglect not the gift of

the Presbyterial function that is in thee, which was given by prophecy with the laying on of hands. Μη ἀμελει του ἐν σοι χαρισματος—ὃ ἐδόθη σοι δια προφητείας μετα ἐπιθεσεως των χειρων—του πρεσβυτεριου.

“Hoc postremo habendum est, non universam multitudinem manus imposuisse suis ministris, sed solos pastores; quanquam incertum est an plures semper manus imposuerint necne. Illud quidem in diaconis, Paulo et Barnaba, et quibusdam aliis factum fuisse constat. Sed Paulus ipse alibi se, non alios complures Timotheo manus imposuisse commemorat. Admoneo te (inquit) ut gratiam suscites quæ in te est per impositionem manuum mearum. Nam quod in altera Epistola de impositione manuum Presbyterii dicitur, non ita accipio quasi Paulus de seniorum collegio loquatur; sed, hoc nomine, ordinationem ipsam intelligo; quasi diceret, Fac ut gratia quam per manuum impositionem recepisti, quum *Presbyterum crearem*, non sit irrita.”—*Institut.* lib. iv. c. 3, sect. 16.

It has not escaped the notice of commentators, that, when St Paul reminds Timothy of his ordination, he says, the *χαρισμα*, or gift, was conferred *by* the imposition of his hands, *with* the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, or body of Presbyters. In the one case he uses *δια*, in the other *μετα*; the first denoting the efficient instrument, the latter expressing simply the concomitancy, consent, or concurrence of the brethren.

NOTE I.

The remark in the text was suggested by reading the following observations in the works of two authors well known and highly respected.

“It will be admitted by every person acquainted with

ecclesiastical history, that the form of government which is called Episcopal has from very early times generally prevailed in the Christian church. For although Bishops and Presbyters appear to be confounded in Scripture, and in the writings of the Apostolical Fathers, yet, in the second century, the name of Bishops was appropriated to an order of men, who possessed exclusively the right of ordination and jurisdiction, and who were the overseers of those whom they ordained. And from the second century to the time of the Reformation, this order of men continued to exist almost in all parts of the Christian world, and was regarded with respect and submission both by the clergy and the laity. But the first reformers, who believed that the distinction between Bishops and Presbyters has no foundation in Scripture, and who wished to apply an effectual remedy to the abuses which appeared to them to have arisen in the progress of human ambition, from the practice of investing Bishops with powers superior to Presbyters, did not consider the antiquity or universality of that practice as any reason for its being continued.”—*Theological Institutes. By George Hill, D. D. Principal, &c.*

“ In the second century, it is very plain that a settled distinction in several respects obtained between the Bishop and his colleagues in the Presbytery, for as yet they may still be called colleagues. Many titles, which had before been common to them all, came at length to be appropriated to him who was considered as their head, such as ἐπισκοπος, ἡγούμενος, προεστώς, πρωτοκαθεδρος, προϊστάμενος, ποιμήν, and some others.”—*Lectures on Ecclesiastical History. By George Campbell, D. D., Principal, &c. Vol. i. p. 180.*

After making some remarks on the authority due to the

Epistles of Ignatius, which he imagines to have been corrupted in several places, Dr C. adds,—

“But should we admit, after all, in opposition to strong presumptive evidence, the entire genuineness of the letters in question, all that could be fairly inferred from the concession is, that the distinction of orders and subordination of the Presbyters obtained about twenty or thirty years earlier than I have supposed, and that it was a received distinction at Antioch, and in Asia Minor, before it was known in Macedonia, and other parts of the Christian church.”—Vol. i. p. 198.

Thus, it was the opinion of Dr Campbell, founded on the writings of Irenæus, that the distinction of the clerical orders was fully established about the middle of the second century. Admitting the genuineness of the Epistles ascribed to Ignatius, (and he does not deny their authenticity,) he acknowledges that the distinction must have “obtained about twenty or thirty years earlier,” the date at which the holy Father suffered martyrdom. But why, as Ignatius was Bishop of Antioch *forty years*, did not the learned Principal go back a little farther?

NOTE K.

See his “*Observations on the First and Second of the Canons commonly ascribed to the Holy Apostles, wherein an Account of the Primitive Constitution and Government of the Churches is contained*,” p. 10.

In connexion with the reasoning of Bishop Burnet, I may state the maxim of Tertullian,—“*Constabit id esse ab Apostolis traditum quod apud Ecclesias Apostolorum fuerit sacrosanctum.*” It is evident, that whatever has been religiously observed in the churches of the Apostles,

must have been delivered by the Apostles.—*Cont. Mar. c. 4.*

A similar remark by Augustin is deserving of notice,—
“That which is held by the universal church, and, without having been ordained by any Council, hath been always retained in the church, is most truly believed to have been delivered by no other than Apostolical authority.”

NOTE L.

The reader may be pleased to see the opinion of Dr Campbell on this head, as he is not only esteemed a learned and acute writer on theological subjects in general, but is regarded by many as having very successfully opposed the pretensions of Episcopacy as an Apostolical institution :—

“Shall we maintain,” says he, “with some zealous patrons of the Presbyterian model, that, in the sublime and allegorical style of prophecy, a community is here personified and addressed as one man? Shall we affirm, that by the angel is meant the Presbytery, which our Lord, the better to express the union which ought to subsist among the members, emphatically considers as one person? With this interpretation I am equally dissatisfied.—Though we have instances, especially in precepts and denunciations, wherein a community is addressed by the singular *thou* and *thee*, I do not recollect such a use of an appellative as the application of the word *angel* here would be, on the hypothesis of these interpreters. But is there no medium? Must the angel of each church here addressed be of an order differing from that of the other ministers, and superior to it, or must it imply their col-

lective body? To me, an intermediate opinion, which has been adopted by some critics, appears much more probable than either. My sentiment therefore is, that, as in their consistories and congregations, it would be necessary, for the sake of order, that one should preside, both in their offices of religion and in their consultations for the common good, it is their president or chairman that is here addressed under the name of angel."—*Lectures on Ecc. Hist.*, vol. i. p. 159.

This president or chairman, as the Doctor is pleased to call the angel of the churches, is, notwithstanding, acknowledged by him to have been a permanent office-bearer, and to have exercised, of course, a kind of episcopacy; for he says, at page 181, "Let it be observed, that I have all along admitted an *original distinction*, which, though very different from that which in process of time obtained, served for a foundation to the edifice."

In a word, the learned Principal gives up the argument so far as it respects an actual parity among the ministers of the Christian church, either in the apostolic age, or in that which immediately followed it; but, without any appearance of proof, he continues to maintain that the clergyman who presided over the Presbytery in those days was not of a higher order than his brethren, being merely the first among equals, or, as it is usually expressed, *primus inter pares*. This was his *opinion*. The cause which he advocated naturally led him to such a conclusion; but every one knows how little value is to be attached to the opinions even of the most profound scholars, in the absence of testimony and in opposition to apparent facts. Dr Hill, we find, admits that, in the second century, "the name of Bishops was appropriated to an order of men, who pos-

sessed exclusively the right of ordination and jurisdiction, and who were the overseers of those whom they ordained." Now, the Apocalypse was written towards the end of the first century ; and as we have no reason to imagine that, before the period alluded to by Dr Hill, the original form of the church could have been changed, the balance of probability is greatly in favour of the opinion, that, in the days of St John, the President of the churches possessed some authority even in matters of ordination and jurisdiction.

NOTE M.

Dr Campbell meets the argument contained in the text, and which is only a more expanded view of the remark quoted from Burnet, with a train of reflection which will hardly satisfy any but such as are previously disposed to be convinced.

"Some have represented it as an insuperable objection to the presbyterian hypothesis, concerning the rise of episcopal authority, that it seems to imply so great ambition in one part, and so great supineness (not to give it a worse name) in the rest of the primitive pastors ordained by the Apostles, and by the apostolic men who came after them, as is perfectly incredible : this they think a demonstration, *a priori*, that the thing is impossible. Let it be observed, that I have all along admitted an original distinction, &c. And so far am I from thinking, that the ambition or the vices of the first ministers gave rise to their authority, that I am certain that this effect is much more justly ascribed to their virtues. An aspiring disposition rouses jealousy, —jealousy puts people on their guard. There needs no more to check ambition, whilst it remains unarmed with

either wealth or power. But there is nothing which men are not ready to yield to distinguished merit, especially when matters are in that state wherein every kind of pre-eminence, instead of procuring wealth and secular advantages, exposes but to greater danger and to greater suffering. A deference, at first merely paid to virtue, comes at last, through the gradual operation of habit, to be considered as due to office. What was gratuitously conferred on the meritorious predecessor is claimed by the undeserving successor as a right. And the very principles of our nature tend to favour the claim."—*Lectures on Ecclesiastical History*, vol. i. p. 181.

There is much plausibility, and perhaps some truth in these observations; but it is manifest, at the same time, that the reasoning implied in them does not account for the facts which meet us at the very threshold of primitive church history. In the case of Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, there was no succession of "meritorious predecessors" to induce the Presbyters to relinquish their rights. On the contrary, these holy Fathers stood next to the Apostles, and were ordained by their hands. The lapse of time necessary to give any effect to Dr Campbell's hypothesis did not take place. Nor was there any opportunity of contemplating that "distinguished merit," in a series of presidents, which is supposed to have prevailed upon the Presbyters to acknowledge a permanent superior. In the time of Ignatius, the earliest period of an uninspired ministry, a regular episcopacy, comprehending Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, was already formed and recognized in the Asiatic churches.

It is deserving of especial notice, that the acute and learned Principal lays so little stress on the opinion of Je-

rome—the main support of the cause in the hands of Salmasius, Dalæus, and Blondel—as to admit, that there was an *original* distinction among ministers as to office ; inasmuch as he acknowledges that there was, from the beginning, a permanent chairman in the Presbytery, who, in course of time, drew to himself the powers and privileges of a Bishop in the usual sense of the term.

That the distinction between Bishop and Presbyter was established at a very early period is admitted by Videlius, an advocate of parity, who, in his *Exercitationes in Ignatii Epistolas*, c. 3, acknowledges that Clemens Romanus was invested with the proper Episcopal authority :—“ Solus Clemens superstes, solus Episcopi nomen retinuit, tum quia inter adjutores Apostolorum solus ipse restabat, quia tum jam invaluerat distinctio Episcopi et Presbyteri, ita ut cæteris Ecclesiæ Romanæ Presbyteris qui cum solo Clemente essent, nomen illud non fuit tributum.” Clement, being the sole survivor, alone retained the name of Bishop ; and this as well because he was the only one still alive of all the assistants of the Apostles, as because the distinction between Bishop and Presbyter was now established, so that the name of Bishop was not given to the rest of the Presbyters of the Roman church who were with Clement alone.

Now, as St Clement suffered martyrdom in the fourth year of Trajan, being the year of our Lord 102, and as he had been, prior to that date, about ten years Bishop of Rome, it will follow, according to the concession of Videlius, that the distinction between Bishop and Presbyter was fully established in A.D. 92 ; that is, about eight years before the death of the Apostle John.

It is not denied that the argument urged in the text for

the distinction between Bishop and Presbyter in the first century—that is, in the latter days of the Apostles—depends not a little upon the genuineness of the Ignatian Epistles. No one any longer calls in question the *authenticity* of these compositions. On the contrary, since the period at which Usher, Vossius, and Pearson, expended their labour on this subject, the objections of the most sceptical do not proceed farther than to insinuate, that certain freedoms may have been used with the ancient manuscript by men who were determined to uphold the cause of Episcopacy even at the expense of truth and honour.

In reply to such an impeachment, which is founded entirely upon conjecture, it may be stated that the Greek copy discovered by Vossius corresponds with the quotations from the epistles of Ignatius inserted by Eusebius and other writers in their several works; the most satisfactory evidence that can ever be produced in favour of the purity of an ancient manuscript. Blondel himself admits, that the Fathers, without one exception, had a full belief in the authenticity of the Ignatian epistles: *Plenam illis ipsis, quas confictas putamus, epistolis, fidem habere Patres.* But he adds, *Quid tum? Quam multa minime suspicaces ac imparatos et fefellerunt semper, et quotidie fallunt!* What then? How many things have always deceived, and do daily deceive men who are not fortified with suspicion, nor upon their guard! This bold and reckless criticism drew from Dr Hammond the following judicious remarks:—

“ If all the Fathers of the church, beginning from those who were nearest to Ignatius’s time, must be involved in the number of these incautious, cheatable men, I shall be

afraid to mention the consequences that will too readily be deduced from thence. I shall only say, may not this liberty, or license rather, be soon extended very inordinately to the invasion of the sacred canon of Scripture? Nay, when the same current and consent of Fathers which delivers down all the books which make up our canon of Scripture for *Canonical* and *Theopneust*, shall be found at the same time to deliver down and make use of these Epistles of Ignatius only with the distinction of *Apocryphal*, (and mean by that, not *supposititious* books, but only books of *inferior* authority,)—when, I say, the same hands of the ancient church shall deliver both the Epistles of St Peter for Divine Scripture, and these Epistles of Ignatius for the Epistles of Ignatius, though not for Divine Scripture, who can say, that Salmasius, when he had thus confidently thrown off these Epistles from being written by Ignatius, did not *consequently* and agreeably to his *προληψις*, concur in the throwing off one of St Peter's Epistles also? And who can think it reasonable that our wariness and censoriousness shall enable us, at 1500 years' distance, to judge more truly of a matter of fact (which none but they that are near, be they never so wary and suspicious, can discern any thing of) than those that lived in those times which were nearest to the scene of action?"—*On the Power of the Keys*, p. 212.

But I repeat, that the only point in the argument which depends upon the reception of the proof supplied by Ignatius, is the comparative earliness of the period when the distinction between Bishop and Presbyter was fully established. According to Dr Campbell, the rejection of that authority would not make a difference of more than thirty years; for he acknowledges, that, in the time of Irenæus,

the disciple of Polycarp, the official superiority of the Bishop was placed beyond all doubt. Counting from the *death* of Ignatius, the conclusion of the Principal is sufficiently correct ; but, as the view which this Apostolical Father gives of the church must be understood as applying to the time during which he lived, the value of his testimony is considerably greater than it is estimated by the learned author of the Lectures on Ecclesiastical History.

NOTE N.

It is known to every one, who possesses the smallest acquaintance with the religious history of the sixteenth century, that the Reformers directed their attacks against the superstitious usages of the church rather than against its actual constitution, or the general principles of its ecclesiastical polity. Bucer was a decided Episcopalian, and even proceeded so far in maintaining the authority of the ancient regimen, as to expose himself to no small degree of suspicion among the more rigid of his brethren. The friends of Calvin alleged that, in opposition to their patron, he meant to introduce a new kind of papacy under the name of Bucerism ; an absurd charge, which arose entirely from his desire to retain Episcopacy as the form of church-government among the several Protestant societies.

But neither did Calvin himself wage war against the constitution of the ecclesiastical body, in the form in which he found it established. In his treatise on the Necessity of Reforming the Church, he uses the words to which I have referred in the text :—*Talem si nobis hierarchiam exhibeant, in qua sic emineant Episcopi ut Christo subesse non recusent, ut ab illo tanquam unico capite pendeant, et ad ipsum referantur,—tum vero nullo non anathemate*

dignos fatear, si qui erunt qui non eam reverenter summaque obedientia observant.

Similar sentiments were entertained by Luther and Melancthon, and, indeed, by all who supported the Augsburg confession. Speaking of canonical ordination, the authors of the celebrated symbol now mentioned, observe, —But the Bishops do either force our priests to disclaim and condemn this kind of doctrine which we have here confessed, or, by a certain new and unheard-of cruelty, put the poor and innocent souls to death. These are the causes which hinder our priests from receiving their Bishops ; and thus the cruelty of the Bishops is the cause why that canonical government or polity which we earnestly desired to preserve (*Quam nos magnopere conservare cupiebamus*) is in some places now dissolved.

And, in another place in the same chapter, they say : And now here again we desire to testify to the world, that we would willingly preserve the ecclesiastical and canonical government, if the Bishops would only cease to exercise cruelty upon our churches. This our desire will excuse us before God, before all the world, and unto all posterity, that it may not be justly imputed unto us, that the authority of Bishops is impaired amongst us ; when men shall hear and read that we, earnestly deprecating the unjust cruelty of the Bishops, could obtain no equal measure at their hands. Quoted by Bishop Hall, in *Episcopacy by Divine Right*, p. 11.

Beza himself looked with a favourable eye on the reformed Episcopacy of England, and wished that it might continue for ever. After extolling the Archbishops and Bishops who had taught and suffered in the cause of God, and expressing a hope that the church of England would

be ever so distinguished, he adds, “*Fruatur sane ista singulari Dei beneficentia, quæ utinam illi sit perpetua!*”

Even in Scotland there was no intention at first to change entirely the model of church-government. The system finally adopted was the fruit of counsels later than the period of Knox, who, acting on the principle of his master Calvin, that *parity breedeth confusion*, meant to institute a polity bearing a closer resemblance to the ancient constitution, which, for various reasons, had long ceased to be popular.

Blondel, too, it will appear from the following letter, did not, more than Calvin, Bucer, and Beza, wish to carry his hostility against Episcopal government where it was unconnected with the superstitions of popery.

A Letter written by Dr PETER DU MOULIN to Dr DURELL.

MY REVEREND BROTHER,—To cast my mite into the rich treasury which you are now furnishing, I must inform you of a remarkable passage very pertinent to your purpose. In the year 1651, that great and good man, my Lord Primate Usher, told me, that the learned Mr David Blondel had concluded his *Apologia pro Hieronymo*, with words to this purpose:—“*By all that we have said to assert the rights of the Presbyter, we do not intend to invalidate the ancient and Apostolical constitution of Episcopal pre-eminence. But we believe, that wheresoever it is established conformably to the ancient canons, it must be carefully preserved; and wheresoever, by some heat of contention, or otherwise, it has been put down or violated, it ought to be reverently restored.*” The good prelate told me, besides, that whereas the book had been written at the earnest request of the assembly at Westminster, of the Scots espe-

cially, who had their agents and leaguers in Paris to strengthen their party, by misinforming the Protestants of *France*, and winning them to their side. When these agents saw this conclusion of Mr Blondel's manuscript, they expostulated with him very loud for marring all the good he had done in his book, disappointing the expectation of the Assembly, and showing himself an enemy, instead of a friend, to their holy covenant. This they urged upon him with such vehemency and unwearied importunity, that they prevailed with him to put out that conclusion.

Having received this information from a person of so much knowledge and integrity as that famous Prelate, yet for a further confirmation I told it to Mr John Blondel, David's brother, then living in London, who denied that there was any truth in that report, and defended his brother as much wronged by it.

If you think, said I, that I wrong your brother, complain to him of me in your next letter, and remember my kind service to him. Mr J. Blondel did not fail to write to his brother about this ; and three or four weeks after showed me a letter from him, wherein he remembered his love to me, and acknowledged that that relation was true.

This advice I thought myself obliged to give you, knowing that no man can make a better use of it than yourself, to whose holy labours about this point the church is so much indebted ; and none more your debtor in the church in that regard, than,

Sir,

Your most affectionate Brother and Servant,

PETER DU MOULIN.

NOTE O.

Athanasius, in his second apology, inserts, among other papers, an epistle of the synod of Alexandria, mentioning, that “Ischyra his ordination by Coluthus being questioned and examined, and it being found that Coluthus had never been ordained a Bishop, but that he had falsely pretended to that title and character, all the ordinations made by him were annulled; and Ischyra, with such others who were so ordained, were declared laicks; which is an undeniable instance, that, at that time, it was the general sense of the church, that none but a Bishop might ordain.”—*Observations on the first Canon, by Bishop Burnet.*

Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian, remarks, that Ischyra therein did a thing worthy of many deaths, πολλων θανατων ἄξιον, and that although he took to himself the name of Presbyter, he did not receive the holy function.

The following resolution, passed by the third council of Toledo, will still farther explain this occurrence :—“Quorundam clericorum dum unus ad Presbyterium, duo ad Levitarum ministerium sacrarentur, Episcopus oculorum dolore detentus, fertur manum suam super eos tantum imposuisse, et Presbyter quidam illis, contra ecclesiasticum ordinem, benedictionem dedisse; sed quia jam ille examini divino relictus humano judicio accusari non potest, ii qui supersunt gradum sacerdotii vel Levitici ordinis quem perverse adepti sunt, amittant.”

THE END.

Russell, Michael

Discourses on the millennium, the doctrine of election, justification by faith, and on the historical evidence for the apostolical institution of episcopacy together with preliminary remarks on the principles of scriptural interpretation

Edinburgh u.a. 1830

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